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PENANG APPOINTMENT

Collected Autograph Edition

BOOKS BY NORMAN COLLINS

Novels

BOND STREET STORY

CHILDREN OF THE ARCHBISHOP

LONDON BELONGS TO ME

ANNA

LOVE IN OUR TIME

I SHALL NOT WANT

FLAMES COMING OUT OF THE TOP

TRINITY TOWN

THE THREE FRIENDS

THE BAT THAT FLITS (a thriller)

For Children

BLACK IVORY

Criticism

THE FACTS OF FICTION

NORMAN COLLINS

PENANG
APPOINTMENT

COLLINS
ST JAMES'S PLACE, LONDON
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T₀
L. E. C.

IT WAS TILBURY. The dockside was in that state of huddled and abandoned desolation peculiar to docksides. Two motor-cars in crates rested at the foot of a cross-girdered inadequate-looking crane; other cranes, bending angularly forward like giraffes, brooded over the attendant shipping; further down the quay, a bulging net full of mail-bags—thousands of important, eagerly-awaited letters—was suspended in mid-air ready to be shot downwards into the mouth of a ship's hold. A pyramid of orange-boxes, brilliantly trade-marked in staring letters, was stacked against the wall; three empty railway trucks, their couplings hanging, waited vacantly for an engine that was missing; a score of figures wearing the peaked caps of railway porters and the blue jerseys of sailors stood about in small hopeless groups, uncertain to which element they belonged; a wind that had become reduced to a draught blew steadily and piercingly through the low Customs House building; and a fine drizzle darkened the natural drabness of the scene to a deeper tone of grey.

The whole scene looked as though it were hovering on the perilous edge between intelligent creation and primal chaos; with the intelligent creation on the seaward side.

Alone, and somewhat detached from its surroundings, stood a small party of people huddled under umbrellas but with white handkerchiefs gallantly and ineffectually waving; they were waving at the rusted, retreating stern of the steamship *Tusitala* that was being conducted by two pigmy and overworked tugs into the main channel. From the stern of the *Tusitala* white handkerchiefs fluttered too.

The water in the wash of the screw came up freshly white and creamed, but the waves had the green smoothness of bottle-glass. Nearer the quayside the water was brown and clouded with pieces of wood, box-ends, a few whole oranges, and the contents of the rubbish pails of half a dozen ships' galleys—all the endless scum that follows and envelops shipping. Large gulls with yellow beaks crossed and recrossed in the wake of the liner.

In the stern a man with a mackintosh buttoned up to the chin wiped the fine film of drizzle off his face, pulled his hat closer down upon his forehead and reflected sadly upon the strange face of adventure.

At last, finding the cold too biting, he took a last look at the white handkerchiefs, at the Customs sheds at Tilbury, at the half-obsured Essex coastline, at the gulls and the cranes and the floating oranges, and turned, shivering, into the open doorway beside him. There had been no one there to see him off.

He found himself in the narrow gangway that the Company's handbook called the Enclosed Passenger Deck. Within, the *Tusitala* was little more prepossessing than the weather. Her paintwork was mostly chocolate brown, grained in white streaks that represented a marine decorator's confused understanding of the processes of nature. The oilcloth that ran along the corridor had a pattern left on it only on the outside edges and was worn nakedly and unashamedly bare at the head of the stairs. Already, before even the tugs had left her, the ship was creaking like a church pew; a creak that seemed to start somewhere down by the keel, and mounted slowly and purposefully through the whole skeleton until even the ornamental woodwork of the cabins and saloons squeaked and tittered.

As he walked slowly along the enclosed passenger deck un-

buttoning his sodden raincoat he reflected that he could have made a gayer choice in his ship. The *Tusilala* might have been designed by a man who hated sailors. He was, however, somehow enchanted by the sense of conscious effort and strength that the rivet-studded walls conveyed; he forgave the ship everything for the sake of the simple and primary fact of its being a ship. He had never been to sea before.

He paced the corridor eight or nine times before something prompted him to go on deck again. Then, standing in the shelter of the leeward side, his elbows resting on the scarred wooden rail, he stared steadily out at the drifting and receding pagcant of green and grey. Already more than half a mile of choppy and discoloured water, crossed by a band of bluish white that marked the track of the revolving screw, divided him from the shore. Now that it was actually happening, there seemed to be something ridiculously unreal in the way that England was sliding, before his eyes, slowly and progressively clean off the map.

A small boat so fat and squat that every wave that touched it broke over its bows and rushed white as soap-suds along its blunt nose almost to the foot of its tiny bridge—a river tug it was—slapped and splashed its way back to Tilbury. He found his eye following it, sympathetically, sentimentally. Here was something real, moving within a few yards of him, that could carry him home again. But the moment passed, and the little tug, its funnel belching grey smoke, was already twenty-five yards astern, bobbing and diving as it hit the waves.

An idea came to him. He left the shelter of the leeward deck and walked toward the bow. As he stepped beyond the edge of the canvas screen that was wet and straining at its cleats, the Channel wind, cold and edged, came boring its way into him. He stood there, his hand on a stanchion to steady himself, looking out to sea. Passing them on the port

bow, so near he could have heard had someone on board hailed him, was a great ship. She was twice the size of the *Tuntala*, painted yellow and white, and crowded all over with the huge horns of ventilators. The ship was riding high, showing the pink bottom paint in the hollows between each wave. At the bow was painted a gay jig-saw of Japanese letters.

A woman muffled up in her coat was standing on the upper deck; beside her was a small boy. The child was waving a handkerchief excitedly up and down. Stephen realised suddenly that the child must be waving at him and he waved back. The unknown child from the other side of the world frantically acknowledged him; they were friends.

The length of white and yellow hull, studded with brass-bound portholes, slid past. The view in front was of nothing but the sea, empty and unvisited. Behind them was England. Ahead, somewhere halfway across the wet perimeter of the globe was Penang, and Raffles Square and the English College.

He realised with a shock how cold he was. He shivered, and unbuttoning the wet collar of his raincoat he turned below.

STEPHEN MACFADYEN was not a good mixer. He was the sort of man that you might know for years, might go for walks with, without finding out that he came from the same town, and knew your brothers and sisters by their Christian names. He was reticent and rather shy; somewhere at the other end of the social scale of conviviality from the com-

mercial traveller. He was not married. Such a man scarcely could be. Short of being wrecked with a woman on a desert island he could hardly in any other way have got to know one well enough to propose to her. But Fate had been gentle with him, sparing him this ordeal. And now at thirty-two when most men, even those who had knocked about a bit in their twenties and had seen the world, would have been settling down and thinking of saving against retirement, he was doing the first rash thing in his life. But not rash, really. He had gone over the correspondence that had reached him on the thin crinkly paper of the tropics with meticulous and suspicious care. He had exchanged and checked references, and had written to a close friend, a Customs official, to make surreptitious enquiries. He had read all about the country in a gazetteer and had confirmed local conditions, climate, white population, social and sporting possibilities, and elevation from a guide book. And the more he had read about it the more Penang had emerged from those rapturous and poetic pages as a far Eastern heaven, a kind of Europeanised and sanitary paradise. But it was not until his solicitor had "vetted" his service agreement, getting the six months' leave changed to nine and securing an extension of the possible period of sick leave, that Stephen MacFadyen took the solemn and irrevocable step of resigning his post of Senior Mathematics Master at Claverhouse Grammar School, outside Newcastle, and was prepared to set out for the Straits Settlements to take up the post of Principal at the English College, Penang.

The last six weeks had been filled with the agitated excitement and turmoil of departure. He reflected on the extreme pressure of the preceding days. His mind was as crowded and jumbled as the photograph album of a summer holiday. He saw himself on the platform of the Grammar School with his

headmaster the Rev. Archibald Whyte, D.D., presenting him with a gold watch and morocco covered volume containing the names of the donors; the words of the valedictory address echoed in his mind—how Dr. Whyte hoped that Mr. MacFadyen was setting an example of courage and perseverance to the boys of Claverhouse Grammar School in going so far to take the refinements of civilisation to those who had been denied its amenities by an accident of birth; how the English College at Penang was getting not only a mathematics master (Dr. Whyte resented those members of his staff who got promotion, and could not bring himself to dwell on this aspect of it) of which any school might be justly proud, but also a reliable slow-bowler; how Mr. MacFadyen had set the school an example of hard work and fair play, and had earned the respect of everyone with whom he had come into contact. Altogether Stephen had been garlanded with compliments. Dr. Whyte had gone on to welcome Stephen's successor. His predecessor, the Doctor emphasised, had set a noble standard; Stephen remembered when he had had the same words said to him.

His mind was full of other pictures, too: of the steamship offices in Cockspur Street with model ships in glass cases and posters of graceful liners with the familiar orange and purple band of the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Company round their funnels, shown against a flaming cobalt sea and sky; of a trunk-maker's in Bond Street where the assistant recommended him a cabin trunk that was lined with a preparation guaranteed secure against the assault of cockroaches; of the absurd sensation of buying an enormous white sun-helmet lined with green to counteract the glare while the window of the shop was streaming with rain, and the papers said there was snow on the way; of having his favourite rod adapted by the makers with a new reel for the different and rougher

delights of Oriental sport—already he saw himself casting delicately over shoals of strange fish, with bodies like the creatures of a nightmare and the complexions of angels, amid a seascape of corals and sponges; of having his tennis rackets restrung with tropical gut; of getting a small library of pocket volumes and a supply of camera plates warranted to withstand high temperatures and wet climates; and of buying a portable medicine chest with bottles of quinine and antiseptic, and a handbook giving instructions for counteracting the effects of sunstroke and snakebite.

His cabin was on B deck. To reach it, it was necessary to descend deeper and yet deeper into the creaking and wheezing depths of the ship. Down below, it was warm and close. Anyone going down there off a promenade deck found it little short of a miracle that there could be so much air above and so little down below.

The whole interior atmosphere of the lounge and the saloon smelt like the original one which the makers had supplied with the ship in 1897; there lingered a confused odour of paint oil, the dregs and drains of food and drink, and the warm sticky effusion of more than a generation of human beings. The only change that came over it was that as the ship got south the internal temperature rose steadily, mercilessly, and the constituent parts of the atmosphere announced themselves more distinctly and unmistakably.

The cabin represented, with the plainness of geologic strata, the various attempts made, first by the owners and subsequently by the directors of the line, to compete with the newer and more luxurious vessels run by other shipping companies. An electric lamp in massive brass gimballs swung over the bed, vibrating at each roll with a high metallic buzz like that of a mosquito. And, as though to counteract it, an electric fire stood under the concealed wash-basin in such a

position that people when washing either kicked the filaments, which were partially protected by a dented iron grille, or found the front of their legs suddenly scorching and blistering from the unexpected heat.

Above the wardrobe stood an electric fan clamped on to the cabin wall. Idly, not because it was hot, Stephen switched it on. Immediately the thing bounded noisily into life; it sounded as though an aeroplane had been started up in the cabin. In a frenzy of efficiency it set to work to cut up the air. As it developed its true speed it began to throb and struggle. It rattled the whole wall. Below it was a tooth glass set above the wash-basin in a metal clamp: that vibrated too. The fan seemed to choke itself with the rush of air and worked in gasping spasms. Whirr-whirr-brrr-brrr-brrr-whirr-whirr. But it stuck to its task. Stephen noticed that the dark red curtain that hung by the porthole was fluttering desperately. He turned off the fan, and it subsided slowly and obstinately, leaving the cabin unnaturally silent. Between Aden and Penang Stephen was to grow horribly familiar with that fan as it flung loads of warm air in his face.

The scheme of decoration in the cabin was brown—a light milk-chocolate brown, and deep red. The small square of carpet between the four bunks was red, too, with the tangled monogram of the initials of the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Company. Stephen surveyed the general effect of the room and remembered the white and yellow ship that had looked like a vessel escaped from a dream that had slipped past them at the mouth of the river. That ship had glittered with the hot gleams of the Eastern sunlight that still clung to it, whereas the *Tusitala* carried round the world with it for ever the story of the grey skies and grim minds of Jarrow and the Tyne.

He looked at his watch: it showed ten minutes to six. He must have stayed on deck longer than he had realised.

As he stood still he became increasingly aware of the throb of the engines. It seemed to mount out of the floor in muscular spasms of energy, through his ankles and his knees until it reached his stomach, and finally his whole body, and his head as well was throbbing in unison. The ship, too, was beginning to rise and fall a little; mounting with a gentle rearing motion followed by a sudden uneasy sideways jerk as though it had slipped on something. The two movements combined to form a reminder, forcible and slightly unpleasant, of the fact that they were at sea.

He knew sufficient about the procedure on ocean liners to remember that it passed for a mark of experience, and was therefore the thing to do, to go down to the dining-room before anyone else—the novices and newcomers—and discuss the momentous question of a table with the chief steward. As he left his cabin a man in a white jacket with the genial red face of a barman stepped up to him.

“Your bath, sir; what time do you prefer it?”

“I’ll bath in the morning,” said Stephen. “Tepid.”

“Eight-thirty, sir?”

“Earlier . . . eight.”

“Very good, sir. I’ll let you know when it’s ready, sir.”

The red-faced man seemed to extract a personal pleasure from the privilege of filling other people’s baths.

“I suppose he feels that he’s qualified for his tip,” Stephen said to himself as he went down another flight of stairs to the dining-room. It is a strange system, that of tipping, Stephen thought; a system on which the entire comfort of ocean travel depends, a system which has everything to condemn it and nothing to commend it except the astonishing and insurmountable fact that it works.

Down on the dining-room deck the vibration of the ship was more clearly noticeable. In the cabin the floor had merely

pulsated with the throb of the engines; here it shook from side to side and reported mechanically and disconcertingly the behaviour of the screw outside.

Stephen found the chief steward seated at a table that had green baize for a covering, poring over a very large table plan and a very short passenger list.

He had the unmistakable air of a man trying to make a very little go a long way. When he saw Stephen he beamed. That beam of the chief steward was the most encouraging thing about the dining-room, more encouraging than the food or the service or the surroundings, more encouraging even than the chief steward himself.

No matter how stringy the mutton, how dilute or improbable the *consommé*, how stale and tired the pastry, or how hard the pears, that beaming smile was always the same. It was like a sun fixed perpetually at the moment of dawn. People who saw a lot of it usually liked it for the first week.

"Good evening, sir. Are you alone, sir?"

Stephen told him that he was.

"Then will you let me fix you up with some pleasant company, sir?" Stephen replied that he would prefer a separate table. He didn't like having to talk at meals unless he wanted to; it was as unreasonable as being expected to eat every time you wanted to talk. The chief steward seemed dashed; the smile flickered but survived.

"There's a nice place, here, sir." His pencil speared a point on the table plan. "It's the Captain's table," he explained in a tone, once cultivated but now natural, that suggested that he was well aware that to have offered the chief engineer's or the doctor's or even the purser's would have been to deprecate his passenger's standing. Stephen hesitated, then curiosity overcame him. "Very well," he said, "put me there. Who else is there?"

"There's a Mr. Doyle and daughter, sir, and friend, a Mr. Brentano. I think you'll find them very good company, sir."

"What's the Captain's name?" Stephen asked.

"Curly, sir, Captain Curly. Been on the Line for nearly thirty years, sir."

The latter was not welcome news. The more Stephen thought about it, the less he liked the idea of spending every meal time for the next five weeks in the company of a senile sea captain and a man who sounded like a foreigner. He wondered idly how Mr. Doyle and his daughter would like it.

At the top of the stairs he nearly ran into a small man with white wisps of hair standing out irregularly from his head like the feathers of an agitated bird, and a pair of watery uncertain eyes. He gave the impression of being in an exceedingly bad state of general repair. His clothes needed a good brushing and sponging; he might have just been turning out a very dusty cupboard. He looked like a man in need of a good holiday. He was muttering some faint words, blurred and inaudible, as he passed by. Laying his hand on the rail as though he expected it to elude him, he began to descend with short hesitating steps, like a child's.

Stephen went through into the bar.

The bar of the *Tusitala* was of mahogany. It was as deeply and devoutly carved as a choir stall. Bunches of hard brown grapes and acanthus leaves, so furiously interwoven and mingled that they might have been fighting, bulged in unexpected places from the panels and took the skin off the knees of unsuspecting and thirsty men as they climbed on to the high stool for a drink.

When Stephen reached the bar the entire front of it was occupied by a heavy man in a light and over-fashionable grey suit. He was sprawling over the stool beside him. His foot, enclosed in a shoe of almost yellow leather, heavily pock-

marked with punch holes, rested on top of one of the carved bunches.

Stephen went to the end of the bar and ordered himself a dry sherry. The heavy man looked up, took a mouthful of whisky-and-soda and remarked in a voice that seemed to be squeezed word by word from the pit of his stomach, "Ship's beginning to roll a bit already, what?" Stephen nodded. The man clearly anticipated that he would say something in return, and Stephen guessed that he was a man who expected to be liked at first sight, a man who would feel snubbed and resentful if any reasonable degree of human reticence were preserved before him.

Looking at him—and he was reflected in all angles and aspects of profile in the mirrors behind the bar—Stephen decided that he must be a Colonial. To a great part of the world no doubt he represented the accepted notion of a white man. His face was tanned to a deep ox-blood red, and along the plump cheeks and across the dimpled chin ran a dark bluish track which marked the path of the razor. Stephen disliked him at sight. He was the sort of man that he could imagine assuring people at home that the proper way to treat a nigger was to kick him and that the nigger respected you for it, and honestly believing what he said.

Not that his face was sullen or disagreeable. On the contrary, his whole being radiated a hearty and aggressive conviviality. He seemed to be on the point of looking round for a back to slap.

"Have this one with me," he said as soon as Stephen's drink was finished. He had watched the level in the glass as intently as an engineer watching a pressure gauge. "Say what it's to be."

Stephen's first impulse was to say that he never drank more than one sherry before dinner; that he had had enough. But

there was something irresistible about the man, something in his evident eagerness to please that made it surprisingly difficult to refuse. It would have been like saying "No" to a child. Stephen told him that he would take another sherry.

"Whisky's better," said the heavy man as he reluctantly ordered the sherry. Stephen had the impression that had they known each other longer he would have insisted on his drinking whisky. "Sherry's too heavy on the liver for hot countries. That's why the sherry they sell in Spain is lighter than the sherry you get in London. Whisky's the only drink that doesn't turn on you no matter what the climate. You hear people talk about the perils of drinking whisky in hot countries. Well, I've lived in the East all my life and I'm none the worse for it. I call whisky a nice clean drink."

"It's all right after a meal," said Stephen. "I like something to give me an appetite."

"Oh, possibly you've got one of those livers that can stand anything," replied the fat man as though to put Stephen at his ease. "I knew a man once had diabetes. He was only allowed to drink rum. They thought they'd cured him. But he went under suddenly. Just collapsed. They couldn't hold him. Left three little kids he did. . . ." The moral, obscurely connected with the benefits of whisky drinking was lost for ever, because he happened to notice at that moment that the man behind the bar was standing idle. "What'll you have, Charley?" he asked. The miracle was that Charley was the man's real name. Stephen admired his companion's skill in being able to find out Christian names before he had been on the ship for more than a couple of hours. It was evidence of a well-developed social *flair*.

The barman thanked him, poured out a 'small gin-and-it, took a gentle sip and put it down again, somewhere out of sight behind the bar. The heavy man did not seem to resent

the slight: what he obviously found provoking was the thought of anyone's being without a drink if he should happen to want it. It gave him an almost unbearable sympathetic thirst, an uneasy tickle, that his own glass was quite unable to dispel, to see anyone near him without something to drink. He was looking round to see if he couldn't find someone else to make up a party and start drinking something when the white-haired, ragged-looking little man whom Stephen had passed on the stairs came doubtfully into the room. The suit he wore was the same, stained and discoloured in two large patches as though he had spilt various things on it at different times and not troubled to wipe them off; but he had put on a butterfly collar and a blue and white spot tie. Against the obvious newness of the tie his neck, pitifully lean and scraggy, like a plucked chicken's, seemed almost indecently old and out of shape.

The heavy man hailed him warmly, half sliding off his chair to welcome him. "Come and sit down and have something," he said, slapping the stool beside him. "What's it to be?"

The newcomer caught hold of the bar with the firm grip of the man who is not quite sure of himself and has to guard against things slipping suddenly and unaccountably out of his grasp. He climbed awkwardly on to his stool. He had evidently had enough already. "I'll have a gin-and-tonic," he said. He spoke like someone who had just been roused from his sleep. His voice was breathless and surprised.

"Just as you please," said the heavy man; "it's your funeral." He clearly resented that it was not whisky that had been asked for. He might have invented whisky in a moment of alcoholic genius, he was so enthusiastic about it.

Evidently the two of them knew each other well. There was probably behind them a long vista of bars, the fat man end-

lessly advising whisky and the little man apologetically preferring gin. In the older man's whole attitude towards his companion Stephen noticed an odd note of apology, of gratitude, even of anxiety. He seemed somehow or other to want to please his companion, drinking off his gin-and-tonic when ordered to do so, and laughing loudly and dutifully at every story he was told. The heavy man, on the other hand, appeared to be deliberately restraining himself, ignoring his companion's raggedness and slovenliness, endeavouring even to make his enforced civilities appear natural, cultivating, as it were, for some incomprehensible reason the society of the older man.

They were a strange partnership these two, one sitting at the bar as though it and all around it were his, and growing more confident and proprietorial at every drink; the other perched on the front of his chair, his chin drooping on to his bow tie, abject, conciliatory, and already slightly drunk.

"How's the little lady?" enquired the heavy man at length. "Stomach-ache better?"

"A little better, thank you," the small man replied vaguely. "She's lying down, resting. She's not feeling very well."

"Tell her to get up and come on deck," said the heavy man, with the hearty confidence of the really well in the presence of sickness. "Lying down just means giving way to it. Fresh air is the only thing when you feel like that. Did she try breathing in time with the boat as I told her?"

"She tried to, but she said the boat kept getting out of time with her."

"How does she seem in herself, though?" the heavy man persisted. "Bearing up?"

"I think so, thank you." The little man's voice was so mournful it was obvious he had no illusions about it. "Of course, it was a bad break; leaving everyone so suddenly.

They were very fond of her. Things are all so different from what she's been used to."

"Bound to be," agreed the heavy man heartily. "But we'll make her forget things. Let her settle down inside and then we'll teach her a thing or two about life at sea. Just you wait until there's been a fancy-dress dance and ball. She'll be a different person then."

"I'm afraid she doesn't feel very much like dancing," said the older man. "She hasn't moved out of the bunk since the stewardess left her."

As Stephen listened to their conversation—and sitting where he was he could not fail to hear every word of it—he grew embarrassed. He felt as though somehow he were peeping into other people's lives; and their intimate private affairs, glimpsed or half seen at most, were being unfolded before him through a chink in the curtain. He found himself wondering what relationship there could possibly be between this nervous shaking little creature, drooping over the edge of the bar, and the woman in the cabin below trying hard to obliterate the memory of people who had been fond of her. He visualised a weak, grey-haired creature—the female equivalent of the little man—vainly struggling from a sense of duty on to the cold wet decks of the *Tusitala*.

"I wish there was something I could do for her," continued the little man in the same plaintive voice. "I wish I could think of something. But she just wants to be left alone."

"Let's send her down a champagne cocktail. Here, you"—the heavy man seemed to swell into even more vigorous life at the thought of supplying a fellow creature with a drink—"mix a champagne cocktail, decently cold, and charge it to me."

"Please don't trouble. It won't be any good. Thank you all the same," protested the little man. "She won't touch it." It

was hard to know whether his objections were to putting the heavy man to the expense or to pouring out a drink that might possibly be wasted.

"That's my affair," said the heavy man, giving the barman a wink that transcended all possible categories of winks and became a leer. "We'll tell the steward to drink it himself if she won't have it. What's the number of her cabin?"

"B 27, but I don't think it'll do any good." The little man ran his hand nervously across his forehead; little beads of perspiration stood out there fixing some of the stray white hairs wetly to his face.

"Good," said the heavy man, "I reckon I'll just slip down with it myself."

The little man nearly tipped forward off his chair in anxiety. He put his hand beseechingly on to the fat man's arm. His voice was hardly more than a squeak.

"No, please don't do that. You mustn't. She wouldn't like it. Really she wouldn't. She's probably asleep," he finished lamely.

The heavy man shook off the restraining hand. "What's the matter with you?" he asked. "Do you think I want to eat her?"

"No . . . no, of course not. Oh dear . . . you don't understand. It's simply that she's . . . she's not herself to-night. She's still upset by leaving and . . . things."

The heavy man seemed to be amused by the older man's efforts to apologise. He was so obviously conscious of his superiority that he appeared to derive a quiet, even malicious, humour from the attempts of his companion to oppose him. When he had let him go once more through a rambling, incoherent explanation he stopped him with the brutal abruptness of a fisherman using the gaff after a long fight on the line.

"Oh, forget about it," he said. "Have another drink and don't let it bite you." He looked up and his eyes red-veined and prominent, caught Stephen's. A smile that softened the hard lines about the mouth and filled the wrinkles around the eyes with meaning, broke across his face. "Forgive me for not introducing you before," he said. "What's the name?"

Stephen told him.

"Then, Mr. MacFadyen, meet my friend, Mr. Doyle. My name's Brentano."

WHEN THE THREE of them went into the dining-room after another round of drinks that Mr. Brentano insisted on standing them, Captain Cúrlý was already there. Any intentions that Stephen had cherished of being able to shake off Mr. Brentano and his friend were thwarted by the attentions of Mr. Doyle himself. As soon as he had been introduced he had got off his stool, upsetting a saucerful of salted almonds on the bar counter as he did so, and come over to Stephen. His speech was halting and a little blurred. It was as though the entire English language had blundered into a fog. He paused before attempting long words. When he uttered them the syllables came out slowly and separately, making even familiar words sound infinitely polysyllabic. He immediately began a long and confidential conversation. Stephen felt flattered but unhelpful. Half Mr. Doyle's remarks were inaudible. Mr. Doyle appeared satisfied however. He clearly found in Stephen the comfort for which he had been seeking. He poured out his troubles incessantly. It was astonishing that any living creature could have so many.

Nothing, apparently, that Mr. Doyle had ever done had turned out exactly right. He was a victim of mischance. Within the last few hours Fate had played all her tricks on him. His cabin trunk had been dropped by the two men who were bringing it on board, and the lock was now broken open and reduced to a ragged band of metal—he showed Stephen a long gash on his finger in proof of the damage done; a cable he was expecting had failed to be delivered; he had nearly lost the boat; and a birthday present he had bought—Stephen could not make out for whom, but he gathered that it was important—was now found to be missing from the baggage.

The stream of Mr. Doyle's troubles was so overwhelming that Stephen could do nothing but nod sympathetically and try to keep pace with them. Once or twice he saw the amused face of Mr. Brentano over Mr. Doyle's shoulder and Mr. Brentano winked knowingly across at him every time. But Mr. Doyle was oblivious of other people. Wounded and rebuffed by a hostile world he had found at last what he had been looking for for years—a listener who really minded. And having found him Mr. Doyle did not mean to let him go without a struggle. That was how it was that Stephen MacFadyen, bitterly sober and resentful, and Hamish Doyle, far gone but happy, came to enter the *Tusitala* dining-room arm-in-arm.

When Captain Curly saw them coming he half rose, supporting his thick short body on the arms of his chair. Evidently Mr. Brentano had made himself known to the Captain already.

Captain Curly was a man who resolutely refused to let circumstances interfere with his peace of mind. He could stand any kind of table company if he was called upon to do so. And in his thirty years at sea he had been called upon to stand most kinds. In the result, his social presence was by now

entirely negative. When someone told a funny story at dinner he laughed, when he was told a low story in the saloon he guffawed. When someone was telling him their personal history—as they usually did before the voyage was over—he remained politely and genuinely enthralled. And when the conversation lagged behind he could always be relied upon to liven it up, according to his lights, by telling one of his collection of nautical and subnautical anecdotes. He did not care in a general way who it was who had to share his table and his company, but he drew the line, as rigidly as a paid servant of a company can afford to do so, at priests, either Roman or Anglican; the former he considered treacherous and subversive and the latter he believed to be stupid and self-interested.

In appearance Captain Curly was not unlike a rather plump and well-preserved old lady. His face was pink and rounded, and his hair which grew to a peak over the left eye was perfectly white. Beneath heavy eyebrows, also white, his eyes twinkled with a sleepy benevolence. At no period of his life had he exerted himself more than the immediate conditions of existence compelled him to do; and only he could say how often he had exerted himself less. He was at sixty-five the captain of the largest ship in the fleet of the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Co. simply by the gentle but inevitable process of elimination. One by one he had seen his seniors succumb to sickness, old age, temptation and even to shipwreck; and each decline had served to bring him one rung nearer the top of the ladder of mercantile marine success without the slightest exertion on his part. On looking back over his life—and the way in which he ordered his days gave him a generous sufficiency of time in which to indulge in the luxury of retrospection—he frequently let his thoughts dwell on the initial error of people who spent their whole lives struggling

and striving and growing old in the process. For what? For what he had got simply by doing nothing. Sitting back in the fifteen-foot by ten-foot Captain's cabin of the *Tusitala*, he used to ask himself what more he could reasonably have expected from Life. He was on his last trip now. There and back again and it would all be over. An active life of inspired regularity would be concluded. His unhurrying gift for doing the right thing, his absolute trustworthiness, had made Captain Curly a byword in the Line. To such a man as Captain Curly, to whom one day was as placid as the next, the conduct and behaviour of the passengers were truly astonishing. He had no illusions about the passenger accommodation being as good as his own. And he could not understand the mentality of these people who apparently liked being transplanted abruptly from one place and one life to another with all their possessions crammed into boxes and cabin trunks. Nor could he understand why once they were on board they did not manage to take things easily and quietly, and live with the smooth regularity of the officers or even of the stewards.

Instead they allowed themselves to be seasick, a matter which Captain Curly persisted in regarding as a matter of self-control. They danced half the night and played strange games that they had not mastered by the time the ship got in. They insisted on seeing the engine-room and sulked like spoilt children until they had gone up on the bridge. Frequently they drank too much and always they ate too much—except when they could not eat at all. They died in their bunks. They developed appendicitis and had to be operated upon. They even gave birth to families.

Captain Curly in his time had known everything possible to happen. "Evening, Captain," said Mr. Brentano loudly. "Down to it already I see."

"Good evening, gentlemen," replied Captain Curly

gravely, shaking hands with Stephen. "There don't seem to be many of us down to dinner to-night." The Captain indicated to his steward that he wanted him to put the remainder of the vegetable that he was serving on to his plate and went on quietly and seriously with the business of eating.

"Can't understand it," continued Mr. Brentano in a voice that suggested that it was necessary that he should. "I always get an appetite as soon as I'm at sea."

"The trouble with half the people," the Captain remarked, "is that they think they're going to be sick before they come on board. And of course they are. It stands to reason. I knew a woman in Durban once who used to believe that she was trainsick. She got so bad that she had only to hear a train-whistle in the middle of the night to come over queer. She cured herself in the end, after the doctor had admitted that he could do nothing, simply by spending two hours every day in a railway station. Got saturated with train-whistles so to speak. Never had any trouble after that. It's simply a matter of control."

It was obvious that Mr. Doyle was not listening. He was clearly torn between the desire to remain and the moral compulsion to go. Finally the moral compulsion overcame him. "It's no good," he said pitifully, "I've got to go and see how she is. Anything may have happened to her."

"Dear old chap," murmured Mr. Brentano as soon as Mr. Doyle had left them on his swaying erratic path towards the door. "He's a bit canned to-night, that's all." Mr. Brentano gave Stephen another of his slow, sinister winks. Those winks were omnipresent and inescapable. That night, in the confused drifting moments between sleeping and waking the red bloated face of Mr. Brentano floated continually before Stephen. It was for ever on the point of being convulsed and flooded into a tremendous deep-meaning wink.

The meal had progressed for a quarter of its length when Mr. Doyle returned. He came into the saloon furtively and on tiptoe. He looked like a man who was walking quietly to avoid waking someone. "She's asleep," he remarked simply when he got to the table. "I didn't disturb her."

Mr. Brentano did not, however, allow Mr. Doyle to live his own life so privately. How did she look? Was she pale? Which bunk was she using? Had she undressed? Was the stewardess satisfactory? Did the porthole open properly? Was she still actually sick? he asked. It seemed as though by some intensive effort of enquiry Mr. Brentano was endeavouring to share the life of the sufferer in the cabin. Stephen wondered how any man could be as patient as Mr. Doyle in answering, and then reflected that they were old friends, Doyle and Brentano, and so had that bond between them which was based as much on the memory of the past as on an understanding of the present. But the friendship was precisely what Stephen could not understand. Even now Mr. Brentano was taking pleasure in scoring off his companion.

"What happened to that champagne cocktail?" he asked.

Mr. Doyle said nothing.

"I suppose you finished it off, didn't you?" continued Mr. Brentano.

"Well, if I hadn't it would have gone flat, wouldn't it?" There was a note of resentment in his voice as though he did not like being reminded about it.

"Absolutely," agreed Mr. Brentano, winking expertly across the table at Stephen. "You did the right thing."

Captain Curly regarded Mr. Doyle with displeasure. He disliked shoddy men. Poverty, decent, threadbare, darned and mended, he knew from experience and could appreciate. But good or fairly good clothes spotted and made dirty—that he could not forgive.

The Captain resented Mr. Doyle's appearance, not as a martinet might have done, for its insidious attack upon the morale of the ship, but simply because it offended the old lady that was in his nature. It made his otherwise nice clean ship appear somehow neglected and untidy. He wished too that Mr. Doyle would sit up like a gentleman and not droop over the table like an empty and abandoned suit of clothes. Already the bow-tie was sodden and discoloured at one end where it had come in the way of a mouthful of soup that Mr. Doyle had been trying to swallow.

But because Mr. Doyle was a passenger, Captain Curly was charming and distantly polite. When Mr. Doyle complained of a headache he agreed, and when Mr. Brentano suggested with a broad wink that it must indicate a change in the weather Captain Curly acquiesced and told one or two slight and improbable stories about sudden meteorological changes that he had experienced during his years at sea.

He eyed Mr. Brentano with more pleasure. The broad shoulders, the neatness of the grey flannel suit, the striped shirt, the silk tie with its pattern of stars and crescents on it—all represented that air of prosperous self-assurance that he liked to see in a man.

Captain Curly regarded Stephen critically. He approved of him too, approved strongly. But he found lacking in him just that sparkle and vivacity which animated Mr. Brentano so agreeably. He looked the sort of man who, in his leisure hours, would sit for hours on end lying back in an easy chair with a dog at his feet and a glass at his elbow, puffing contentedly at a pipe. Captain Curly on the other hand was a man who enjoyed the livelier rites of bridge and a bit of gossip. He looked at Stephen again. The grey hair above the forehead, the line of the jaw set so firmly that he might have been assumed by the casual spectator to have been biting down hard

on something, the eyes, grey and unmelting, all denoted a man of character. His whole air, he reflected, was of power held in reserve behind chains of discipline. He put him down finally as a doctor and compared him mentally with Dr. Jarvis, M.B., his own ship's surgeon and his private and official despair.

It annoyed him not to be able to say definitely what his passenger was. Mr. Brentano and Mr. Doyle were different. The former was obviously a speculator and it is in the nature of speculation to be varied. The latter had clearly come down so far in the world that within limits he might have been almost anything before the decline, and indeed probably had been.

The meal proceeded smoothly enough, except for Mr. Doyle, who kept looking anxiously towards the door. Twice he caught Stephen's eye and each time he gave a little nervous smile of acknowledgment that seemed in some obscure way to imply that although people like Brentano might put up a steady barrage of enquiries and the Captain look as professionally and imperturbably sympathetic as a doctor, it was really only people like Stephen and Mr. Doyle himself who could understand the anguishing position of a parent whose daughter was ill. Mr. Doyle put down his knife and fork every few minutes and looked mournfully towards the door.

Suddenly his face lit up like a baby's. "She's come," he said. Stephen turned in his chair and looked. Crossing the room towards them was a girl who walked with slow hesitating steps. She moved so softly that she might have been carrying something. She could not have been more than about eighteen or nineteen. He caught his breath. He could see now why Mr. Doyle had been so anxious about her. Beneath the heavy wave of her dark hair the pale oval of her face was as white as if she had been standing in moonlight. Then she drew near and

Stephen could see that her eyes fringed by long lashes were rimmed with circles.

"The child's ill," he thought. "She's been crying. My God, she's beautiful," he added to himself.

Both Mr. Doyle and Mr. Brentano jumped to their feet. But Mr. Brentano won because Mr. Doyle could not safely let go of the back of his chair. He could merely stand there smiling and swaying, while Mr. Brentano reached out a helping hand to the daughter. When Mr. Brentano put a friendly arm round Miss Doyle's shoulders—his large reddish hand showing up in startling contrast to the extreme pallor of her skin—Stephen saw or imagined he saw her give a slight tremor right through her body, an instinctive shrinking away from her companion. But her face with her downcast eyes showed no signs of it, and Mr. Brentano showed no indication of having noticed anything amiss. On the contrary, he patted her arm gaily and energetically as if she had been a dog. "Well done, little lady, well done," he said. "You'll feel a different woman in the morning."

By the time Mr. Brentano had brought Miss Doyle to her chair, her father, using the backs of other chairs in the nervous manner in which a novice uses the rail at a skating rink, had contrived to get round the table towards them. Then Stephen heard Miss Doyle speak for the first time. "Are you all right, father?" she asked. Her voice was quiet and anxious.

Mr. Doyle stood smiling down at her, affectionate and slightly fuddled. Instead of replying he bent down and kissed her. Then he started his difficult and semi-circular course back to his chair.

As soon as dinner was over, Miss Doyle got up, paler than when she had sat down. She said good night to the Captain and to Stephen, and thanked Mr. Brentano for everything that he had done for her. It was obvious that she knew nothing of the champagne cocktail that her father had drunk. With difficulty she managed to dissuade Mr. Brentano from accompanying her back to her cabin, on the pretext that she had told the stewardess to get a bath ready for her. She went over and kissed her father, who was sitting back in his chair, happy but removed.

Lying flat in his bunk that night feeling the unfamiliar rock and roll of the boat, Stephen thought of Miss Doyle and tried to remember how she looked. But each time he nearly saw her—pale, dark-haired, long-lashed—the red blandly cheerful face of Mr. Brentano would superimpose itself upon the picture.

The following morning he awoke, refreshed but confused, to the new experience of finding himself on board ship. The night had been long and interrupted. People with heavy insensitive feet had walked past his cabin door and had paraded over his head. They had gone about their business slamming doors after them. The ventilator had whistled like a flute until Stephen had closed it. And then the temperature had risen slowly, degree by degree, until he had been compelled to slip out of the narrow wooden-framed bunk across the vibrating sloping floor and open the ventilator again. Whereupon it had whistled with the same note as before. The walls of

the cabin had creaked as though they were alive and groaning feebly. It was different from the short cracks and ghostly foot-falls heard in old houses on land. It was as soft as though the ship were breathing deeply and at length. It would mount until the whole air was full of small noises, growing rapidly into larger ones. The panels seemed to be splitting at the pressure of forces unforeseen by the ship's architect. The main beams of the ship were warping and giving way as the ship rose and fell. The keel itself was buckling up and breaking with loud reports as the vessel tried to support itself on the peak of one wave while, all round, the water was rushing away. Then the noise would suddenly cease, only to begin again when the ship inclined to the other side. At the same moment Stephen's dressing-gown on the door would resume its incessant pendulum march.

He bathed early in salt water in the tall iron bath with the tin of fresh water slung on a wooden board across it. The bath was old and the paintwork uneven. Every roll of the ship sent a small wave travelling across it. Then he understood why there was so little water in the bath that the steward had taken so much trouble in filling. Stephen did not linger in that bath. Nor did he linger in the dining-room. Breakfast was apparently not a meal on which the victualling staff of the *Tusitala* exerted themselves. The dining-room still had about it the odour of last night's dinner. The long U-shaped table had been stripped to its green baize undercloth. There were the memory of old meals and the promise of meals in a distant conjectural future. What was missing was any suggestion of a positive and appetising present. Even the chief steward with his professional smile was absent. It was as though the sun had gone in. The only person in the dining-room was the second mate, who looked liverish and out of sorts. He deliberately avoided Stephen's eye as he came in.

Before nine o'clock Stephen was on deck. Already the *Tusitala* was out of the Channel and heading south. As yet the south brought no warmth. Instead, it was uncompromisingly colder. The wind no longer blew in the steady biting stream that had swept down the Thames Estuary, but now came in sudden gusts and swift explosions. At one moment the weather was merely cold and windy; at the next Stephen felt his breath being snatched from his lungs and his whole body was drowned in an angry torrent of air. The waves, too, were larger, and came past in a tall tumbling procession topped with white. The *Tusitala* was riding a following sea. Some time during the night she had ceased to pitch, first head down to the oncoming waves and then stern down with the churned milky waste behind, and was now rolling heavily from side to side in a slow ungraceful waddle.

As he looked along the stretch of wet deck, with the chair that an optimistic steward had placed there, roped back for protection, he felt as he had felt earlier in the dining-room—that he had arrived too early and surprised the ship before it was ready for him. A group of Lascars with rubber scrapers and buckets were assiduously douching an already drenched deck. They were thin and obviously out of their element. Theirs was the most unnecessary labour he had ever watched.

Everywhere around him were people engaged in the interminable and impossible task of making the sea a comfortable resting-place for man.

A sailor was clambering along the rail to secure one of the canvas side-screens that had somehow contrived to pull loose and fold backward upon itself. His oilskins were pressed flat against his chest and stomach and legs by the force of the wind outside. Another party of men towards the bow were working hard beneath a constant Niagara of spray, knocking additional blocks into the groove above one of the holds.

Standing in the shelter of the port awning Stephen looked out, not at the waves near at hand, green and glassy, but at the sea beyond. It had that air of inescapable desolation which doctors believe that men tired of the noise of cities will find restful. It was a reminder, harsh and uncomfortable, that no matter what improvements man might impose upon the gentle meadows and quiet hillsides of the lands, the wild and changing deserts of the ocean would everlastingly defeat him.

Already the ship which had seemed large and massive at the Tilbury dockside looked strangely small and inadequate for its task. There was about the whole adventure something of the fantastic quality of a dream. He had quietly slept his way, alone except for people engaged upon the same strange odyssey as himself, out of the solid security of land into this un-Christian and shifting world of water.

He left the comfortable shelter of the screen, buttoned the storm flap on his raincoat across his throat, and set out to walk the deck seriously, assiduously. As he came astern, his body leaning over at an angle ridiculously out of the perpendicular to counteract the long lurch into which the ship had fallen, he saw a huddled figure in a mackintosh clutching the rail ahead of him. Against the grey background of the sea and the bright foreground of the deck the figure might have been posed for a study of human loneliness and frustration.

Stephen braced himself up for the difficult task of walking, and passed on. Just as he drew abreast of her, however, the figure turned. It was Miss Doyle.

Her face was still pale, her eyes deep blue beneath the long dark lashes. He wondered what irreverence in his nature it was that could have obscured this face in his mind with the hot shining vulgarity of Mr. Brentano's.

"Good morning," he said. "You're up on deck early."

"I couldn't sleep," Miss Doyle replied. "I've been awake most of the night."

"Was the ship rocking too much for you?"

"Yes, that and other things. I think a cabin's a loathsome place." She gave an involuntary movement, half frown, half shudder, and left the rest of the sentence unfinished.

"Aren't you getting cold here?" he asked. "Why don't you walk round for a bit."

She left the rail where she had been standing and began to walk beside him. He was taller by six inches, and as they walked he could look down and observe her. In the hard light of morning her face looked surprisingly young. Had it not been for the sharp line of her breasts under the tightly belted mackintosh, she might have been no more than sixteen. But there was about her a dignity, a spiritual quality of reserve, that separated her from both her surroundings and her youth. She seemed a creature of inner and unsuspected life, someone who had been ruthlessly repressed and disciplined by others and was now—possibly for the first time in her life—learning the sensation of freedom. Looking down at her he wondered whether she was ready for it.

They walked round the deck together. It was as bleak as a race-course that has been swept by rain. The *Tusitala* was still rolling freely. They had to brace themselves against its sullen tiltings. It was like trying to walk in a world of perpetual earthquakes.

"Look," said Stephen. "There's a ship over there."

Low down on the horizon a pale smudge of smoke and the faint upper works of a vessel could be seen, half hidden and apparently motionless, in the midst of the tumbling seas.

"I don't want to look," Miss Doyle said quickly. "I hate ships; I wish I'd never set foot on this one."

Stephen regarded her with distant and amused contempt;

he instinctively despised neurotic people and disliked the way they complicated the normally simple process of living. "Have you had any breakfast?" he asked abruptly.

Down in the dining-room the chief steward had by now appeared. His blue uniform was tight and double breasted: it crudely parodied the Senior Service. He was servile and cheerful. Other people's breakfasts evidently made him happy. He watched Miss Doyle with obvious delight. She made a good breakfast. That in itself he took as a kind of compliment. Most of the young ladies he saw ate one hopeful, hurried meal as the ship was leaving port and then disappeared from the dining-room for days on end. He resented it. No waiter can really like people who are sick after every meal; and the fact that he was a nautical waiter did not lessen his dislike.

Stephen offered Miss Doyle a cigarette. She took it and smoked slowly and reflectively. She had pulled off the tight brown hat she had been wearing. Her dark hair was drawn smoothly across her brow. She looked young and beautiful. The chief steward noticed one of the table-stewards staring at her with interest. He crossed over to him and drew his attention, sharply and impolitely, to the plight of a passenger who had been left without any toast for his marmalade. It was remarkable the way the chief steward could control his smile, switching it on for passengers, off for table-stewards. To have blundered once would have been fatal.

"Mr. MacFadyen," said Miss Doyle at length. "There's a question I'd like to ask you."

"I'll try and answer it," he replied.

"Well, then, will you tell me please if my father was drunk last night?"

He did not reply immediately. "Haven't you seen him like that before?" he asked.

"I suppose that's answer enough," she said. After a pause she added: "Can you tell me something else?"

Stephen nodded.

"Was he very drunk?"

"Fairly," he said.

"Do you think he's like that often?"

"I shouldn't think it's the first time," he said.

"Won't it kill him if he goes on like that?"

Stephen shook his head. "I don't suppose he even realises how much he takes. But if anyone tried to stop him he'd find out all right."

"You mean that he won't ever be able to get over it?" Miss Doyle exclaimed. The words came in a rush, breathless and anxious.

"You know him better than I do, don't forget," Stephen replied. "I only met him last night. I should say, if you asked me frankly"—the angel of truth that had presided over Stephen's cradle was everlastingly condemning him to say to people's faces those things that they themselves had asked for but would rather had been left unsaid. "I should say, that he looks like a man who took a good lot and took it pretty much as a matter of course. Haven't you been living at home?"

Miss Doyle said nothing. She just sat motionless in her chair.

Stephen repeated his question.

"I hadn't seen my father for six years," she said. "I don't think he was like that then."

"Probably not. Six years is a long time. Did he live abroad?"

"He had a hôtel in Penang," Miss Doyle replied. "I was born there. Father sent me home when I was still a baby. He said it wasn't healthy in the East for a girl. This is the first time I've been out there. I was brought up in England all my life."

"Is Mr. Brentano any relation of yours?" Stephen asked.

"No. He's simply doing a piece of business with my father," Miss Doyle replied. "It's very important. That's why they see so much of each other. Mr. Brentano's been very good to us."

"Do you like him?" Stephen demanded.

Again there was a silence between them; again a shudder, slight, doubtless imaginary seemed to sweep through Miss Doyle. But it could not be wholly imaginary. That question had made her start just as definitely as though he had hurt her, had touched some hidden nerve.

"Why do you ask?" she said.

"I wondered," he replied simply.

She passed her hand across her forehead to brush back an invisible strand of hair. It was a gesture of weariness, of extreme earthly hopelessness and defeat.

"I'm sorry if I've said too much . . ." Stephen began.

Perhaps it was the hesitating way he spoke, his evident desire not to hurt, that soothed Miss Doyle. "It's all my fault," she said, "I should never have asked you. Please don't say any more about it." She took her raincoat from the hands of the table-steward who had been standing by making strenuous but unsuccessful efforts to look as though he were unaware of the conversation that was going on under his nose, and left the room.

Stephen went back on deck alone. He was trying to fit together the fascinating and scattered pieces of the jig-saw of Miss Doyle's life. At the end of half-an-hour they were still as jumbled and disarranged as before.

Between rising and going to bed on the first day at sea Stephen discovered what every sea traveller ultimately discovers. A ship, even a large one, is an unusually small place in which to confine an active human being for any length of time.

And the *Tusitala* was not large. Nor, for that matter, was it convenient. The ship's architect who had designed it had not allowed himself to be side-tracked by frivolous and minor considerations about the comfort of the passengers and the amount of deck space that was to be left open for them, but proceeded in his serious, placid, obstinate Scotch manner in his little office on the Tyneside to design a ship that between its high bulging sides could carry enough cargo to justify in the eyes of the owners its 13,000 tons gross tonnage. The only thing that he had not allowed for was the trade depression, which sent the ship out every trip showing her bottom paint.

Before lunch, even before the sudden short blast of the ship's syren that announced to an idle and indifferent world that the *Tusitala* was celebrating mid-day, Stephen found that he knew every corner of the ship. A mild discontent, faint but insistent, began to grow within him. He wanted a walk, a good long one on a straight road. This caged stuff, just round and round, didn't seem worthy of the name of walking. When luncheon time arrived he wondered if he would see Miss Doyle, and he looked forward to it.

Miss Doyle however did not appear. Nor did her father and Mr. Brentano. They, so a steward reported, were sitting at the bar in the smoking-room and Mr. Brentano had just sent through to the dining-room for a plate of cold beef underdone. Mr. Doyle, either because he was not so much at home at sea as his companion, or because his digestion was not equal to it, was having nothing at all to eat.

Captain Curly seemed surprised at the absence of his fellow lunchers. "Miss Doyle not coming down?" he asked.

"I expect she's not well again," Stephen replied.

"A charming girl," remarked the Captain. He was ready for his bit of gossip.

"Very," Stephen agreed.

"Quite different from her father?"

"Quite."

"I suppose Mr. Brentano is her uncle?"

"No," said Stephen sharply. "He's no relation. Just a business acquaintance."

"Really," replied the Captain smoothly in a voice that seemed to contain a hint of something malicious. "I didn't know they were friends of yours."

"I only met them last night," he said, aware that the Captain by the delicate precision of the machinery of his tittle-tattle had acquired one of those small shreds of irrelevant information which were his intellectual mainstay.

The Captain had seen that Miss Doyle looked unhappy, and the thought that a drama, a real human drama, might be developing at his very elbow and that he did not know the first facts about it, sent little tingles of dismay up and down his spine.

"Very good company that Mr. Brentano," remarked the Captain.

"Very good indeed," Stephen agreed.

From beneath his benevolent white eyebrows Captain Curly looked at him in critical astonishment. The man might have taken a solemn oath to reveal nothing about himself. Such reticence, however, proved an irresistible stimulation to the Captain. He immediately tried one of his simplest, most elementary gambits, one rarely known to fail.

"Is this your first passage East?" he asked.

Stephen told him it was.

"It's a great experience," said the Captain majestically. "Something not to be forgotten."

Stephen did not appear to want to contradict him. The Captain went on.

"What port are you for?"

“ Penang.”

“ Penang,” said the Captain musingly. “ I’ve had some times in Malay. Thirty years ago it was a veritable death trap, you know. White men used to break up out there like a lump of sugar in a cup of tea. It’s the damp. Hot steamy damp. Heat alone doesn’t matter. It’s the wet heat that kills. Have you ever been in the Palm House in Kew? ”

Stephen nodded, but the question was evidently rhetorical. The Captain continued without a break. “ Just imagine living in that atmosphere all the time. Everything goes rotten out in Malay. I’ve seen a new rattan chair, just fresh from the makers, sag and come apart from the joints as soon as the air out in those parts got at it. It’s the same with men too. Even the best of them go all to pieces. I put a doctor man down there one trip.” Captain Curly abandoned his knife and fork and settled himself down to the serious business of his narrative. “ He’d been in some kind of trouble at home and wanted to go somewhere quiet where people would not point the finger of scorn at him. We warned him about the risks, but he would go. Naturally it was some time—five years or possibly six—before I went there again. We hadn’t been in the harbour for five minutes before a native boat came out rowed by a man in clothes that a decent scarecrow would have discarded. He was brown all over where his skin showed through the holes—which was almost everywhere. But his hair was bleached by the sun and the rain, till it was like straw. It was the most awful hair I’ve ever seen.

“ They didn’t let him aboard at first and he just rowed round shouting out my name and sometimes breaking down and crying, just blubbering, like a child, out there in his tinpot boat. He’d a spray of faded pink flowers stuck in the prow, I remember. Then he began pelting the ship with some coconuts out of the bottom of the boat, nearly upsetting him-

self every time he stood up to throw. It was when the men began to throw pieces of coal back at him that I came on deck to see what the disturbance was. As soon as he saw me, he went fairly mad, and started to blow kisses, screaming out, 'Don't you know me Captain Curly, don't you know me? I'm Doctor Hammond, Doctor Hammond, M.B. I won ten shillings off you.' And sure enough so he was.

"We lowered a ladder and he clambered up on board. He was so happy and excited at seeing his own people again that he tried to go round shaking hands with all the men who had just thrown things at him. They kept their distance, however, and he came and put his arms right round me in front of them all.

"He told me everything. He said he was very happy out there, at least he thought he was until he saw us. He'd settled down with a coloured girl, 'married' her he called it, and had three children. Nice kiddies they were, scarcely darker than Italians, but very suspicious and shy. I went to see him in his own house several times. The mother was a quiet little mouse of a thing, no bigger than a school-girl. She seemed always to be walking about on tiptoe, she was so silent. She was afraid of me because she thought I'd come to take her husband away. When she found I hadn't she became very friendly and tried to make amends the only way she knew how. One night when the Doctor passed out early, she kept looking at me and then at the ramshackle bed which lay in the corner, and made little sucking noises with her lips, wrinkling up her eyes until they were no more than little bright points in her face. She even started to undo her white cotton *sari* before I cleared out.

"I'm a cautious man, Mr. MacFadyen," Captain Curly chuckled over the memory of the incident. "But I nearly forgot myself when I looked back and saw the little siren with her long black hair down to her knees standing at the door of

the hut kissing her little hand after me. It's lucky for me I wasn't a young man at the time. I might have fallen."

"What became of the husband?" Stephen asked.

"I only saw him once again," replied the Captain sadly. "He rowed out in a great hurry to ask if I could give him a corkscrew. He said his own had been stolen from him by the missionaries. I gave him one and he nearly broke down. Then I thought I'd please him by giving him an old magazine. He picked it up and opened it at a picture of the Derby. It must have reminded him of old times. He went very white and for some reason or other flew into a great rage. Then he started to tear the magazine to pieces. He couldn't rip it as it was, so he tore the pages down separately and threw the bits about. Then with the corkscrew in his hand, and still shaking with rage, he went back down the ladder to the boat. A corner of one of the pages he had thrown away alighted on his head and was caught there amid all his frowsty hair. That was the last I ever saw of him. He may be there now for all I know. I told you that Malaya was dangerous."

The Captain picked up his knife and fork and resumed his meal. At the same moment the steward behind the Captain's chair relaxed noticeably. He had heard that story almost incessantly right through his life, coming and going, in fine weather with all the ship's fans frantically working and in storms when he could scarcely stand and serving at table was a sort of desperate juggling, in half the seas and all the oceans of the world. He always followed the story closely and nervously, his lips moving in time with it. For some reason it left him worried and displeased if the Captain strayed in the smallest detail from the unwritten text. It was rarely, however, that he was either worried or displeased.

"I hope that sort of thing isn't inevitable out there," Stephen remarked with a laugh.

The Captain waved the suggestion aside. "If a man can steer clear of whisky," he said, "and isn't addicted to women there is no reason why he shouldn't be as comfortable in Penang as he is in Palmer's Green. You, or I, Mr. MacFadyen, could spend a lifetime there. It's ladies that it tells on. The heat is the trouble. Believe me it's heartbreaking, utterly heartbreaking, to see young women, girls in their twenties, go out there all decked out in muslins and cottons and with their trunks full of evening dresses. They may wear those dresses once or twice. But they soon go to rags out there. The East is no place for evening dresses and it's no place for white women. I've had the girls, scores of them, tell me so on their way back. Sometimes the girls just collapse and the doctor sends them home, sometimes their husbands see things in time. Are you leaving Mrs. MacFadyen at home?"

"I'm not married," Stephen told him.

"Is that so," said the Captain. He rubbed his hands with pleasure. Bachelor's were a source of great delight and quietly malicious amusement to the Captain. They gave themselves such airs. They thought themselves so devilishly clever in having avoided being married. And what was the result? They were in everlasting terror of its happening, in fear of meeting the inevitable woman and being trapped. In his whole attitude towards women, Captain Curly was a simple uncomplicated character. At the mention of a woman a great surging wave of sympathy and compassion began to rise within him. Being a man of stereotyped imagination he assumed that all women were either in distress at the moment or were on the point of committing some helpless, irrevocable, typically feminine act of folly that would plunge them into distress in the immediate future. In the result, he was sorry, acutely sorry, for the entire regiment of womenkind. And when as frequently happened a woman showed herself at all times

perfectly well able and accustomed to looking after herself, the Captain felt sorry for himself. It seemed to him as though in some obscure fashion he had been deceived and had been made the victim of a confidence trick between the sexes.

And such was the spirit of the age, that more and more women planned their lives, and the lives of their daughters, with the evident intention of practising a deception on the Captain. That was why he thought Miss Doyle was so delightful. She was beautiful, innocent, helpless; she did not look the kind of girl who would ever in any circumstances contradict a man. She appeared to Captain Curly as a rare and precious throw-back to the remote Golden Age of womanhood. "You're going out for the Government?" Captain Curly enquired politely with the suggestion in his voice that he quite appreciated the fact that nothing less than a crisis could possibly account for such an interruption in the normal routine of his passenger's important life.

"No, I'm not in the Civil Service," Stephen said.

"Well," confessed the Captain, "you don't altogether surprise me. I've known a lot of Government officials in my time. They're mostly poor creatures. They get all the initiative knocked out of them, just making reports and waiting for someone else to say what to do."

He paused. At this point, his passengers usually opened their hearts to him and told their secret and intimate history, sketched before his eyes the whole intended pattern of their lives, confessed their vain, foolish ambitions. But still Stephen said nothing.

The Captain was happy nevertheless in having intruded sufficiently deeply into his passenger's life to learn that he was unmarried. Such a situation was always promising of development. He rose, gave Stephen a pleasant ladylike smile,

pursing up his lips and narrowing up his eyes as he did so, and went on deck.

Stephen waited sufficiently long for the Captain to get out of the way. Then he followed.

MR. DOYLE locked the cabin door for the sake of privacy and spread everything out on the bed. There was his cheque-book with the three unused cheques adhering to the stubs like the obstinate last leaves of autumn; his pass-book with the last half-dozen entries in red; a pile of old cheques; and the sheaf of letters from the bank manager. They were formal, unpleasant letters; re-reading them was like remembering an old snub.

Mr. Doyle checked the entries in the pass-book by the pile of old cheques. They were grimly correct, and showed beyond all possible doubt that out of a bank balance that had been mysteriously and suddenly raised from nothing to £250, cheques to the amount of £272 had recklessly been drawn. It made Mr. Doyle feel a bit of a devil contemplating all those cheques he had written. The last letter from the bank manager had been terse and discourteous, however: it had spoken quite openly—after various veiled hints in previous notes—of legal action. Mr. Doyle felt grateful to Mr. Brentano for having stepped in handsomely and paid up the miserable twenty-two pounds. It had closed the matter abruptly, with dignity on Mr. Doyle's side. The bank had since written asking for the return of the cheque-book, but Mr. Doyle had ignored the letter. He felt that he had that one over them, at least.

Finding no consolation in figures, Mr. Doyle proceeded to go diligently through all his pockets. He placed their contents in a pile on the dressing-table: the pile of rubbish grew. There was his watch, golden in appearance, but not negotiable for profit in the better-class pawnbrokers; a cigar so frayed and rolled that it might have been trodden on; a handkerchief; an imitation amber cigarette holder; a small tube of medicinal peppermint tablets; a packet of cheap razor blades; half-a-dozen bus tickets; a note-case containing four pounds; nine shillings and eightpence in coins; and a folding corkscrew. It was the sort of collection that might have emerged from the pockets of a dissolute school-boy. Mr. Doyle regarded it with dismay.

"You're broke," he said to himself at length. "Stony; that's what you are." He paused for a moment brooding over the miscellaneous mess on the bed and then shovelled all the papers back into his open trunk. He shut the lid down with a vicious snap as though in the hope of shutting them out of existence. He re-stuffed his pockets and rang for the steward.

"Can you make a decent cocktail on this ship?" he asked when the steward had at last managed to enter. Mr. Doyle had forgotten to unlock the door.

"Yes, sir," replied the steward.

"Well, tell me the names of some, can't you?" Like most crushed characters Mr. Doyle was brisk in his dealings with inferiors.

"White lady?"

Mr. Doyle shook his head.

"Side-car?"

"I've had it," he said. "It's a woman's drink."

"Bronx?"

"Sick of it. Aren't there any new ones? What do you fellows do all day? Can't you invent some?"

"There's one the saloon steward mixes himself," the steward explained; "it's called a Seagull."

"Damn silly name," replied Mr. Doyle. "Enough to put a man off. What's it made of?"

"I think it's brandy mostly, sir. It's very good, sir; lots of kick in it."

"All right," said Mr. Doyle. "Bring me a Seagull. A large one."

He sat back as far as he could in the wicker chair in his cabin. The bill for the drink, he reflected cheerfully, would not be presented for nearly eight thousand miles. It was an awe-inspiring term of credit.

The Seagull was as inspiring as a piece of good-luck. Mr. Doyle admired the mind that had conceived it. It went down the throat like a ball of fire and continued to burn with a brisk steady flame in the stomach. Under its potent influence an idea came to him. He went in search of Gratia. She was sitting in the cabin looking out through the porthole.

"You're very quiet, dear," he said. "Nothing worrying you I hope."

"Nothing, father, thank you," Gratia replied. "I'm all right."

"Good," said Mr. Doyle. "I'm glad to hear it. Because my little girl knows I should be miserable too if she were, doesn't she?"

Gratia looked at her father curiously: she felt he hadn't come just to say that.

"I wonder if you could help me in one little way?" Mr. Doyle asked at length.

"Of course I will, father, if I can."

"Oh, you can all right," he replied. "You know that five pounds Mr. Brentano gave you for Christmas? Well, how much have you got left?"

"I'll show you," said Gratia. She got her purse and emptied it out on her lap. There's three pounds twelve shillings and threepence. That's all there is. I was stony when he gave it to me."

"One pound seven shillings and ninepence just frittered away," mused Mr. Doyle. "Ah well, you're young. Youth's the time to enjoy yourself. You'll find out the meaning of money later."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not blaming you, dear," Mr. Doyle went on. "I just wondered if you could lend me the money till I can get to the bank again? I foolishly forgot to get any ready money before I came aboard. Very embarrassing to run short of ready money."

"Of course you can have it," Gratia exclaimed. She thrust it into Mr. Doyle's hands.

"That's very nice of you," said Mr. Doyle. "I shan't want all of it though. You'd better have this in case you need anything." He handed Gratia back the two and threepence. "Of course if you want anything just tell me and I'll get it for you. It's only for a little while in any case." He nodded his head knowingly. "You just wait and see what I've got up my sleeve waiting for you. You're on the outside edge of a good thing."

He came over and kissed Gratia. "Sure you're all right?" he asked. "Your Daddy couldn't bear it if anything happened to you."

Between the hours of lunch and dinner Stephen conscientiously sampled the not inexhaustible attractions of the *Tusitala*. Every time he walked the deck it seemed to shrink a little. After he had been round a dozen times it seemed as small as a child's play-pen. He gave up trying to walk, having discovered that the charm of walking lies not in move-

ment but in progress. He tried walking in the other direction, but that too palled.

He looked through the illustrated weeklies in the ship's small and inferior library. The truth did not break on him at the time that these weeklies would not be changed the whole way to Penang, and that by the time he had reached his destination he would be able to recognise as old acquaintances and enemies the features of hunting and county people, utterly unknown to him when he came abroad. He tried the smoking-room. But the sight of Mr. Brentano showing a bored steward a trick with three matches and a wine glass drove him away again. There was nothing for it but the saloon.

The saloon was occupied by people whom he had not seen before, isolated human forms sitting by themselves, hidden behind newspapers, thinking private thoughts. These people Stephen discovered to be one of the mysteries of ocean travel. They haunted the ship like ghosts, quietly and decorously. They avoided meals and crowded occasions. If a concert were in progress in the saloon they were to be found on deck huddled in rugs upon deck-chairs. If everyone was on deck looking at a passing liner they hid below in the saloon, silent and unobserved. And they were numberless. Every second or third day a new figure, pale and wan, wrapped in ridiculous additional clothing, would appear for a few fleeting moments striving to enjoy the wind and the sun of the upper air. But invariably they seemed to find the ordinary conditions of human life too boisterous for them, and they would return shivering to their *oubliettes*, to reappear somewhat startlingly after the mere fact of their existence had been forgotten.

Stephen left them to each other's company. To sit in the saloon was like sitting in a cemetery. He went down to his cabin and lay on his bed, trying to sleep. But he could not. With vexatious and obstinate insistency his mind returned to

the problem of Miss Doyle. He saw her a victim to the climate and the life, returning to England broken in health and beauty. He reassured himself that he was probably worrying unnecessarily; she was certainly good-looking enough to get married promptly on arrival to some wealthy merchant who spent one year out of every three at home. But supposing that didn't happen? Supposing she went immediately somewhere up country to a plantation, or the like, with Mr. Doyle and Mr. Brentano. What then? That Mr. Doyle was devoted to his daughter, Stephen did not question; but he was in some doubt as to his remembering about his daughter's health. His own would probably give Mr. Doyle plenty to think about. And as for Mr. Brentano, the whole thing was ridiculous. Mr. Brentano would never remember to look after the pretty daughter of a man with whom he had once done business. Mr. Brentano probably had a flourishing tropic household somewhere in the Straits with its refrigerator and own electric plant and innumerable fans. And after being ponderously polite to Miss Doyle all the way out, probably even flirting with her boisterously and good-humouredly, he would say good-bye to her father and go home and straightway forget about them both.

The idea of Miss Doyle solely under the guardianship of the friendly but fuddled Mr. Doyle was as alarming as the thought of a child caught out of its depth in a swift current. And in those last moments that preceded sleep, Stephen could see her, beautiful, derelict, pathetic, drifting further and further out of depth and out of reach.

He did not see Miss Doyle until the following morning. And when he did see her he realised somewhat to his own surprise how much he had been looking forward to their meeting. He had expected her the previous night to dinner, but she had stayed away, and in her absence he had woven

elaborate and conflicting theories around her empty chair. Stephen was a man not given to much abstract speculation, and he was becoming astonished at the power of his own invention.

When he woke in the morning he stood for some time at the porthole contemplating the green and grey surface of the waves. To all appearances they were the same waves as those he had seen the morning before on rising. They might have been wound past on an endless roll. Through the *Tusitala's* frame a heavy throb-throb continued to pulsate, causing the glass over the wash-basin to maintain its mosquito-like buzz. But isolated in that wet and shifting world it was as though the ship were stationary and helpless, while all around the water, piled up and hurrying, was busily engaged on some momentous business of its own.

While he stood there watching he suddenly remembered it was a Sunday and reflected that religion at sea was scarcely a matter of Sabbatarian observance. The only thing apparently that differentiated this from the long sequence of days that lay in front and trailed out behind the life of the ship was a notice pinned on a board outside the dining-room announcing in large type that Divine Service would be held in the saloon at eleven o'clock, when a collection would be made for the Seamen's Charity. Below this was a smaller notice, a postcard in fact, on which were printed in shaky and imperfect letters the words: *Holy Mass will be celebrated at 7.30 every morning in the Third Class Lounge*. For a moment he had stood there wondering at the grim perseverance and unsleeping watchfulness of the Catholic Church in a heretical and hostile world.

Stephen was surprised by the speed with which he had learnt to accustom himself to the conditions of life at sea. His first shave had been a painful and hazardous operation; his second was bloodless and normal. In the smaller ways too, in

remembering to put books and papers in places where the roll of the ship would not fling them on the floor, in refraining from opening the weatherside porthole after the steward had closed it, in using the tub of fresh water slung across the bath when trying to make a lather, he discovered that it was possible to be tidy, dry, and clean even on board ship.

It was therefore with a pleasant feeling of conscious superiority over adverse circumstances, of victory over the rough forces of Nature, that he dressed and breakfasted quietly, satisfyingly, alone. Mr. Brentano was not down; Stephen imagined him waking up and feeding in his cabin greedily about eleven o'clock. Mr. Doyle was not downstairs either. Probably he would rise feeling considerably worse than when he went to bed, even probably a little worse than he had been the morning before and the one before that. He would turn away with a shudder at the thought of eggs and toast and coffee, and finally compromise with some form of gin-and-tonic pick-me-up, eventually turning up on deck somewhere around midday nervous but cheerful, polite and conciliatory towards Mr. Brentano.

When he went on deck Stephen congratulated himself that he was the first on board again. But he was not. For standing with her back to the rail with her eyes on him was Miss Doyle. He saw her immediately. There was colour in her cheeks, and she was smiling. She came forward as he went up to her.

"Are you better?" he asked.

"I wasn't really bad," she replied. "I just didn't want to see anyone."

"I see," said Stephen slowly. "I'm sorry."

"Oh, I didn't mean you in particular. I meant just anyone."

"What are you doing up here so early?"

"I've been to Mass," she replied.

Stephen paused. "Are you a Catholic?" he asked.

"Is there anything very dreadful in that?"

"It's just that I hadn't somehow expected it. It came as a surprise."

"I know you Protestants don't approve of us," she said.

"I knew a priest once who told me that an old lady once got into a railway carriage with him because she thought it was safer travelling with a clergyman, and then changed coaches when she found he was a priest."

"Were you born a Catholic?" Stephen asked.

"My mother was a Catholic," she replied with the deep seriousness that he had noticed when he first heard her speak. "She died when I was quite little. I was brought up at the Seven Wounds."

"The Seven Wounds?" he repeated.

"The Mission of the Seven Blessed Wounds," she explained.

"I went there when I was two. They were very good to me. The Mother Superior was over seventy when I knew her. I was only a baby at the time, but I can still remember her."

"Were they good to you there?" Stephen asked. He liked hearing her talk about her childhood. It made him feel that he had known her longer.

"I was very ill with a low fever when I went there," she said. It was obvious that she liked talking about the past; probably she lived in it most of the time. "The doctors thought I was going to die. But the Mother Superior had me brought to her. I can still feel just what it was like when she took me in her arms and put me on her lap. Nuns aren't allowed to use scent. But she always smelt as though she did. It was like incense, only thinner. Perhaps it was always being about in the Chapel. She hadn't been out of the Convent for thirty years. She wasn't one of the visiting sisters. She kept me in her room for three days. She wouldn't have anyone disturb

her. She didn't eat anything all the time; she could go for days without food. She just drank a little water, too, whenever I asked for any. And all the time she was praying. I could see her lips moving whenever I woke up. On the fourth day, so they told me when I was older, she rang for one of the visiting sisters and said to her that I was safe again, but still very weak, and that they were to put me back with the other children. Then she went straight down to the chapel to make her devotions. She was very holy." There was a pause, and Gratia added, "When she died they found the marks of the stigmata on her side and feet quite plainly."

Stephen looked at her in amazement.

"Do you really believe that?" he asked.

"Believe what?"

"The stigmata, and going without food, and healing by prayer?"

Miss Doyle seemed surprised. "Well, you wouldn't get a lot of old French nuns making that kind of thing up, would you?" she said. "Anyhow the doctor had said they could do nothing for me before the Mother Superior told them to bring me to her. I was given up for dead, and I'm talking to you now. There's no need for any faith to believe that, is there?"

"Were you brought up in a convent in England?" Stephen asked.

At the mention of the convent in England Miss Doyle caught her breath. He guessed that it was there that "they," the people he had heard her father mention, had been very fond of her. "Yes," she said. "I was there for nearly eleven years; it's a terribly long time in a life, isn't it?"

"How old were you when you went there?" he asked.

"I was seven," she replied. "Father put me on the boat at Penang in charge of some friends of his. I hated them. I led them an awful dance. Once I ran away and hid for hours so

they'd think I'd been drowned. Everyone was very good to me. I'd go up on the bridge with the Captain for whole afternoons. I can remember just what it was like when he used to lift me up to show me something. He had a big moustache, and the ends used to tickle me. He said he'd got two little girls at home just like me, and I made him promise to bring them to see me when we arrived. But of course he never did, and I used to wait, hoping they'd come. Father had given one of his friends a letter for every week we were aboard, and they used to call me and pretend the post had come, and I used to write answers. But as father never replied to anything I said to him I got suspicious, and then one day I found that it was all a joke, and that everyone on board was laughing at me. I didn't speak to the people I was with for an entire week I was so unhappy. I didn't even write to father when I got to England because I felt he'd tricked me."

"Children have the hell of a time sometimes," Stephen agreed.

"Oh, I got over it," said Miss Doyle, shrugging her shoulders. "The nuns were very kind to me from the first. They were used to children who'd left their parents and they knew just how they felt. I cried myself to sleep every night the first week, but one morning the nun in my dormitory took me out for a walk. I told her everything—all about my mother, and the letters on the boat, and wanting to go back. I don't think I've ever told anyone so much. When I'd finished I felt all empty inside. She understood perfectly and told me she'd keep it a secret, so that just the two of us knew, and nobody else. I felt better after that. I loved her. She trusted me so much that she didn't even read the first letter that I wrote back to father."

"Do you mean to tell me that the nuns used to read your letters?" His Calvinistic blood mounted at the thought.

"It was mainly for the spelling," Miss Doyle answered placidly. "When I was about fourteen I used to be given the juniors' letters to correct myself."

"Were you absolutely by yourself in England for all those eleven years?"

"Of course I was," Miss Doyle told him. "Father couldn't leave the hotel to anyone else. It had the best place on the front and everyone was after it. He tried to come several times and even wrote once telling me the name of the liner, but something always turned up at the last moment to stop him. He used to send me presents to make up for it. I've got them all still."

"I wonder that he knew you when he did see you," Stephen remarked.

Miss Doyle took the remark at its most innocent implication.

"He used to send me the money every Christmas to have my photograph taken," she explained. "One of the nuns used to take me all dressed up, and the photographers would pose me against a rock or something. I used to give one to the nun who took me—nuns weren't really supposed to accept presents from girls—and the other I always sent home to father. He knew what I looked like all the time."

"Did you know your father when you saw him?" Stephen asked.

"I knew him at once," she said, "but he looked very different. I remembered him as being so big and solid, and when I saw him he seemed so little and thin. He'd been ill, remember. It was an awful shock the way he arrived. I was up in the music-room with one of the sisters when the Mother Superior came in. She looked very white and upset about something. She spoke in whispers to the sister in the corner for a moment and I knew something was wrong. Then they called me over. When they told me my father was downstairs

I just didn't believe it. I went downstairs behind them wondering if I was going to cry. And there in the waiting-room was father, in dreadful white tropical clothes and canvas shoes. For a while we didn't say anything. We just stood looking at each other. And then father blurted out that he'd come to take me away.

"The Mother Superior was furious, and told him what she thought of him. She wanted to send me away so that I shouldn't hear. But father said he wanted me to stop. Then she reminded him that he hadn't paid a penny towards my keep for years. It was the first time I'd heard about that and it made me terribly ashamed. Father's got a frightful temper you know, and he said terrible things to the Mother Superior, called her an old spider who wanted to keep everything that got into her web, and said that he supposed she wanted to make a nun of me."

"And did she?" asked Stephen.

"No; I wanted to," Miss Doyle replied promptly. "But the Mother Superior wouldn't let me. She said it was not my vocation. She said I was too frivolous."

Stephen looked at her puzzled. It was absurd; like accusing her father of fanatically strict temperance convictions.

"Father went away after that," Miss Doyle continued, "and didn't come back or write or anything for a couple of days. I remember that during that time I just didn't believe that he'd come at all. The sisters didn't say anything about it either. They just went on as though nothing had happened. Then one day the Mother Superior sent for me, and there was father sitting there with her again; he looked very apologetic and nervous. He'd obviously just asked the Mother Superior's pardon for the scene the last time, and I remember wondering from the look on her face whether she'd accepted it or not.

"There was a priest there as well, one I hadn't seen before.

I knew he was a missionary because he had a great bushy beard. He was sitting apart not saying anything; just listening. When I came in he gave me a smile and I smiled back though I didn't know him. He was so natural about it that we might have been seeing each other for years. The Mother Superior explained that I was going away. Father Xavier—that was the missionary—was going back himself to the Straits Settlements the very next day. He was in charge of a Mission there. She said he would meet me and look after me. Father raised some objection to that and tried to take offence. But the Mother Superior and Father Xavier were both against him. I can see Father Xavier getting up, he was over six foot, and towering over father and arguing with him in that deep voice of his.

“Father didn't raise any more objections after that. And it was all arranged that I should attend the Mission out there and help the sisters with the children. I can do anything with children. So Father Xavier said good-bye to us and smiled at me again and went off. And father got out a cheque-book and asked how much were the fees he owed. When she told him it was nearly two hundred pounds he naturally quibbled a bit. Finally he wrote out a cheque. The Mother Superior looked at it as though she doubted it, and put it away in her blotter. I hated seeing it all happen.”

“What did you do?” asked Stephen.

“I went round saying good-bye to everyone,” Miss Doyle said slowly. “It was awful. I found I simply loved people I'd always thought I hated. I used to go and look at things, silly things like the roller we used for the tennis courts and the piano in the music-room, and wonder how I could ever live without them.”

“But weren't you excited about going to Penang?”

“In a way I was. I'd never been outside the Convent really, except to stay with other girls in the holidays. And

father wanted us to have a fortnight in London before going back. He said that he was over here on business with Mr. Brentano. Mr. Brentano wanted us to stop with him as his guests. Father told me that I needn't feel that we were sponging in any way because it was all part of the business. Anyhow, Mr. Brentano wanted to give us the best of everything. We stayed at a hotel and we went to theatres and cinemas the whole time. He bought me little presents everywhere we went. I simply had to stop him. I'd never had so many things. He's a very great friend of my father's, you know."

"How long has your father known him?" Stephen asked.

"Oh, they've known each other for years," Miss Doyle replied. "I've never seen him until this time, but father used to mention little things about him in his letters."

Along the deck, past the chairs where they were sitting, came the swaying figure of Captain Curly. His body had early in life adapted itself so perfectly to the uneven motion of ships at sea that every wave seemed to give him a fresh impetus, as though he were a man walking along a spring board. His peaked cap with its band of gold was down low over his forehead, in the nautical manner, and his squat body was squared to the task of daily exercise. He was thinking of nothing but himself. As soon as he saw Miss Doyle and Stephen sitting together all thoughts except that of joining them left him. In a small way he felt rather as a dejected gold prospector feels when he finds that he has stubbed his toe against a peculiarly large and shining nugget. He visibly quickened his step. He came up and, with a smart half-bow, saluted in a manner that he had long imagined to be quite irresistible to the ladies. "Good morning, Miss Doyle, good morning," he said. "It's a great pleasure to see you about again. I'm glad to find that your friend has got you up so early."

"We met up here by accident," Stephen replied lamely, conscious that in some fashion the Captain was presuming upon a friendship that within the Captain's meaning of the term did not exist. When he had made his denial a certain kindling in Captain Curly's eye made him wish that he had not spoken.

"Extraordinary place a ship," continued Captain Curly blandly. "If you want to meet anyone, you can comb the ship with a search party and you won't find them. But if you are trying to avoid someone you'll find yourself running into them all the time. Been up here long?"

"About half-an-hour," said Miss Doyle.

"So long as that," replied the Captain. "You must both have been up early. I hope you won't be too tired to come to my service at eleven o'clock."

"I've been to Mass already," Miss Doyle told him.

"So you are a Catholic." Captain Curly spread himself more firmly on his short buoyant legs, and Stephen gave up all hopes of his going. "Now I always say that Catholicism and Protestantism are simply different aspects of what is really the same thing. Like the inside and the outside of a dome, you know. Some see one, some see the other. But it's the same dome."

It was not the first time Captain Curly had delivered himself of this little piece of theological profundity; nor, providing he met other members of the Roman religion, would it be the last time. He had said it so often and no one had contradicted him, that he had begun to feel that he must have hit upon something pretty good.

Neither Miss Doyle nor Stephen made any comments, and the Captain, who had grown used to such silences on the part of his listeners, and rather welcomed them, went on, "And are you a Roman, Mr. MacFadyen?"

Stephen shook his head. "No," he said briefly.

The Captain raised his eyebrows a little. Things were becoming even more interesting. Mr. MacFadyen had not been to Mass, and therefore could have no excuse, other than that of his own inclination, for being on deck at 8.45 on a Sunday morning—an hour unheard of in passenger circles. There must, he decided, have been an understanding, an assignation, between the lean, hard-faced passenger who was travelling alone and the beautiful girl who was sitting beside him at this moment. The Captain began to revise his opinion of Stephen. Hitherto he had regarded him as a dull dog. Now he decided that he must in reality be a dark horse.

"Is your father about yet, Miss Doyle?" continued the Captain, who, being in his way a wise man, liked to base his speculations upon the utmost amount of data.

"I haven't seen him," she replied. "He doesn't usually get up until much later."

"Has he missed his Mass?" asked the Captain, his voice indicating that anything so unthinkable shocked him.

"He's not what you'd call a practising Catholic," Miss Doyle explained. "He only goes sometimes."

"And Mr. Brentano?"

"He's the same. He went with me in London, but he doesn't go regularly."

"Ah, Mr. MacFadyen," said the Captain in a voice that seemed somehow to nudge Stephen in the ribs, "one of us will have to take Mr. Brentano's place, I can sec. It's all wrong that a charming young lady should have to go to church alone."

"I wasn't alone," Miss Doyle explained. "The Second and Third Class are full of Catholics."

"Have you got a nice priest on board?" enquired the Captain, contriving to imply that he was perfectly aware that

personal infatuation was the only reason why Catholic women ever attended Mass.

"No, he's horrid," answered Miss Doyle. "He's like a hairdresser's assistant. I think he must be Portuguese. He's very dark and short and you can't understand what he says. I think he still feels sick."

"Dear me," said the Captain. "You'd far better stop with us. Ask Mr. MacFadyen to bring you down to the First Class Saloon at 11 o'clock. Then you'll see how well your Captain can conduct a Service. I know Mr. MacFadyen will be coming in any case."

Actually the Captain bitterly resented having to waste an hour of his otherwise unoccupied time in the cause of a religion which he regarded as superstitious, ignorant, and ridiculous. He did not like to assume, even for the sake of the Company which he loved, the rôle of clergyman which he despised. But if he did have to do so he liked to have as large and representative a congregation as possible. Sometimes there would be a clergyman on board who liked to be asked to conduct the service himself. Clergymen, he noticed, were invariably bad at deck games and sought desperately for something to restore their self-respect. They invariably accepted the Captain's offer. On these occasions the Captain stayed away and enjoyed his private agnostic thoughts while the *ff* passages of the hymns disturbed the peace of his small and godless cabin.

After dinner Mr. Doyle found Stephen sitting in a corner of the smoking-room reading. Mr. Doyle seemed to have had plenty to drink before he sat down at the table, and the bottle of champagne which Mr. Brentano had provided had already gone to Mr. Doyle's head. He was so pink in the face that he might have emerged from an oven. His scanty white hair was standing up on end. It made him look innocently terrified. He had buttoned his coat in the wrong buttonhole so that it

stuck out in front, giving him the effect of a shameless expanse of bosom. He was a strange and dishevelled figure as he stood in front of Stephen, smiling and swaying.

"Nice to find you, Mr. Mac—Mac—MacFadyen," said Mr. Doyle. "I've been wanting to talk to you. I've been wanting to say thank you."

"What for?" Stephen asked.

"Before I tell you," Mr. Doyle insisted, "let me know is I'm interrupting. If you say I am I'll go away."

"Not at all," Stephen assured him. "I'm doing nothing important."

"That's very kind of you, very kind indeed." Mr. Doyle sat down beside him and moved along, wedging Stephen deeper into his corner. "Have something to drink?"

Stephen declined and Mr. Doyle seemed disappointed. "Never mind," he said. "We'll have our talk first and drinks later. I wanted to say thank you to you for being so nice to my daughter this morning. Should have been up there myself. I was prevented at the last minute. I only heard at dinner from the Captain how you looked after her. Mr. MacFadyen, you don't know how that pleases me. I take it as a personal kindness. She hasn't got many friends on board and I want her to enjoy herself. That's all I care about—seeing that girl enjoy herself."

Stephen assured him that he had done nothing. Mr. Doyle, however, had reached the point when everything was wrong with him. For the last few minutes he had been trying to pull the couch on which he and Stephen were both sitting so that he could get a better view of his companion. No form of words but his own would completely satisfy him.

"Pardon me for differing," Mr. Doyle insisted, "but you did do something. I appreciate it. I've slaved for that girl. Private circumstances have sometimes made it difficult for me

to do everything for her that I'd have liked. But I've done what I could."

He shook his head sadly and sat back. He was silent for a moment and gave the effect of a man quietly but doggedly quarrelling with himself. "That's it," he announced at length. "I've had a hell of a lot of private circumstances in my life. I've been fighting private circumstances ever since I was born."

The steward hearing Mr. Doyle's voice and imagining that Mr. Brentano must be somewhere about came over.

"I insist," Mr. Doyle began when he saw him. "You must have this one on me." He said these words in the easy parrot-like accents of a child saying grace. Subsequently, however, he made no effort either to pay for the drinks or to sign the chit which the steward left with them.

The drink had its effect. It was the one too many. It overthrew the last barriers of Mr. Doyle's reticence. He might have been in a confessional on the night before battle. There seemed to be something inside him prompting him to tell the whole of his troubled shameful history.

"Don't think, Mr. MacFadyen," he went on after the fifth or sixth attempt to reproduce his entire autobiography without a break, "that I've always been like this. I haven't. It's been domestic troubles and private circumstances that have brought me down. When I was a young man I could—I could—I could—afford to spit in anyone's eye." The memory of this luxury of conduct of which Fate had since deprived him seemed to rest heavily on his mind. He remained awhile without talking, simply drinking his gin-and-tonic and smiling rather stupidly at Stephen whenever their eyes met. The gin evidently more than counteracted the tonic qualities of the water.

"I've had a funny sort of life," he observed at length.

"Ups and downs. Things happening and—and all that kind of thing. Never know where you are for ten minutes on end. Everything goes on all right for a bit and then wallop, something happens and where are you? Someone gives you a tip that looks good, you put your shirt on it and it all goes *phut*, or you don't do anything and it turns out all right. If I could live my life again I could show you a thing or two. I'd make it look different. I'm a failure. That's what I am. A failure."

It did not seem to Stephen that despite the intimate nature of the conversation he was getting very much out of it. The only person who was really enjoying this orgy of repentance was Mr. Doyle himself.

As soon as a convenient pause came Stephen stretched himself and tried to rise up. Mr. Doyle observed him.

"Please don't go, Mr. MacFadyen," he pleaded. "I've been waiting for this. I want to ask your advice."

Mr. Doyle's face was pinker and more pathetic than ever, his hair more scattered and erect. His innocent-looking and slightly glazed eyes were fixed firmly on Stephen.

"What do you want to ask my advice about?" Stephen asked.

"It's about Gratia . . . that's my daughter," Mr. Doyle explained. "She means a lot to me, everything in fact."

"I know," said Stephen. "You told me so."

"I'm wrapped up in that girl," said Mr. Doyle unheedingly, "absolutely devoted to her. She's been brought up beautifully. Nothing's been grudged her. And I want to see her get the best of everything same as she's been accustomed to. I don't want her to know what it means not to know where to turn for the next halfpenny."

"I can quite understand that."

"But what can she do?" persisted Mr. Doyle.

"I suppose she can marry, can't she?" said Stephen. He

disliked the conversation, and wanted to break away from the close circle of Mr. Doyle's acquaintance. But Mr. Doyle blocked the only way of escape.

"Do you think so?" he asked eagerly. "You don't think eighteen too young to marry?"

"I'm quite sure it is," said Stephen firmly. "I didn't mean yet."

I was afraid you didn't," pursued Mr. Doyle in a woe-begone, disappointed voice. "But she's not really young in her ways you know. She's like her mother. Very quiet and serious. But you've told me what I wanted to know. She's the only person I'm thinking about. I want to do what's best for Gratia."

"But it will rest with her, won't it?" Stephen pointed out.

The longer he talked to Mr. Doyle the less he found to like in this quivering, shrunken, ingratiating little man. As he looked at him and noticed how he had allowed his glass to make a careless pattern of spots on the surface of his dress-suit, he compared him mentally with his daughter. Evidently Miss Doyle represented the victory of environment over heredity.

"Ah, Mr. MacFadyen," said Mr. Doyle musingly, almost as though talking to himself, "you did the wise thing in not marrying. I don't mean, mind you, that there aren't compensations about a good woman's love and devotion and all that. No one could say that my wife wasn't a woman with a heart of gold. She was a saint; a bloody absolute saint. But no bachelor can ever know the anxieties a father goes through. If it weren't for Gratia I should be a free man at this moment."

"Things will probably right themselves," said Stephen consolingly.

"That's the whole point," agreed Mr. Doyle. "I can see daylight ahead. But it all depends on Gratia—everything

depends on her. Naturally I don't want to force her to do anything distasteful to her. I love the girl too much for that. In any case I hate the idea of her marrying. Hate it. I knew a father out in Java shot his son-in-law on the wedding night because he couldn't bear the thought of his laying his hands on his daughter. Jealousy I suppose you'd call it? But it doesn't hurt any the less, no matter what you call it, does it? But on the other hand, I can't bear to see the girl go without things when just for the asking she could have everything she wants. There's a string of pearls the size of walnuts"—Mr. Doyle idly sketched a series of melon-sized circles in the air—"could come her way if only she does the right thing. It's waiting already for her."

"Does she know anything about it?" Stephen enquired.

"Not a word," said Mr. Doyle, dropping his voice as though afraid that a stray whisper might reach her. "Not so much as a hint. But, believe me, she'll guess. Women have a sort of instinct. She's been at school until a few weeks ago. You couldn't expect her to realise anything yet. But it's a wonderful chance."

"When are you planning for all this to happen?" asked Stephen.

Mr. Doyle drew the tattered remains of his dignity around him.

"Mr. MacFadyen," he said, "you misunderstood me. I am not planning anything. It's all left to Gratia. I . . . I . . . haven't decided what she is to do yet," he finished lamely.

"I see," said Stephen. He got up and pushed past Mr. Doyle.

"I haven't said anything to offend you, have I?" Mr. Doyle asked anxiously as he moved back. "I value your advice you don't know how highly. Won't you have another drink?"

"No, thank you," said Stephen curtly. "I'm going up on deck."

"Ah!" observed Mr. Doyle with a happy smile. "What a splendid notion, I think I'll come too."

He rose on uncertain feet and followed.

THE MORE Stephen saw of Mr. Brentano, the more he liked him. Really it was impossible to dislike the man. He so obviously wanted to please. He was as healthy and as boisterous as an ox. He seemed to be compounded of a great deal of energy, mostly of a primitive and unassimilated variety. Conversation with Mr. Brentano was composed largely of digs and nudges. He contrived to convert all the social and intellectual arts and pleasures—conversation, dining, drinking and entertaining—into a boisterous and uproarious pantomime. He was the kind of man who could be relied upon to get a party going and keep it going. He prided himself on his talents and kept none of them under a bushel.

When Stephen found him he was talking to and at the ship's doctor.

"Come along, Mr. MacFadyen," he yelled, "and hear what he's been saying to frighten me. You know Dr. Jarvis, of course, don't you?"

Dr. Jarvis was a man wound in the soft cocoon of inaction. He had been ship's surgeon for nearly eleven years, during which time his only important case had been one of appendicitis. He had operated and the patient had died. The victim's family had brought an action against the Line for

gross negligence, but the jury exonerated Dr. Jarvis in such generous terms that he had actually emerged with a small but distinctly luminous halo from the whole affair. He had even been "news."

There had been also two cases of smallpox and one of what he had identified (erroneously it transpired) as bubonic plague, and so caused a minor but memorable panic at Southampton. For the rest, his work was composed mostly of treating the breakages, sprains, burns and ruptures that incessantly occurred among the large, and notoriously careless, Lascar crew. It was not, however, so much any actual sequence of work that exhausted him and wore him out as the possibility, as he himself was fond of explaining, that he might be called upon to do anything at any moment. It was this that made him regard himself as a cruelly over-worked man.

"Dr. Jarvis," Mr. Brentano continued delightedly, "has been telling me that I shall be dead by fifty."

"No, no, Mr. Brentano, please," Dr. Jarvis protested. "I didn't say anything of the kind. All I said was that you had a high blood pressure and weren't taking proper care of yourself."

"Meaning what?" asked Mr. Brentano, winking across at Stephen.

"Oh, little things like not taking too much violent exercise, and getting over excited and smoking too many cigars."

"And drinking too much, eh?"

"Yes, drinking is another," agreed Dr. Jarvis guardedly. "After about forty the arteries have a way of hardening and the heart can't work things off as it used too."

"Then how much longer do you give me?" asked Mr. Brentano, with a broad smile, as though there were something funny about sudden and premature death.

"Oh, please don't put it that way," Dr. Jarvis asked

earnestly. "I assure you that you're good for years. You've got a magnificent physique. The only thing is that you're going back to a hot climate, and you ought to take things a bit slow, that's all. After a certain age you can never be certain of anything inside the human body."

"Can't you?" said Mr. Brentano, and called the steward over. "Three double Scotches!" he said.

"No, really, thank you; never anything of that kind at sea," Dr. Jarvis protested.

Mr. Brentano accepted the statement with a wink. "What about you, MacFadyen?" Stephen noticed that Mr. Brentano had already abolished the formality of titles.

Mr. Brentano seemed to be the only person who really wanted a drink. Dr. Jarvis, despite good-humoured insinuations about private and secret tipping being worse than frank and open drinking, remained firm. Stephen, too, declined. Mr. Doyle was nowhere to be seen. "In that case," remarked Mr. Brentano gaily, "I'm going down to the bar. They promised that they wouldn't give concerts in the bar so long as I didn't have my drinks in the saloon."

When he had gone, Dr. Jarvis turned to Stephen. "That man," he said, pointing with his thumb after Brentano, "has got an amazing amount of energy. Too much, in fact. He's spent nearly an hour in the gymnasium this morning. That sort of thing's all right for youngsters. It doesn't matter when you're in training. But you can't live like an alderman for half the week and spend the other half getting your weight down. It isn't natural. Besides, sea travel upsets most people."

"You're a bad advertisement for a shipping line," Stephen observed.

"Well, isn't it true?" replied Dr. Jarvis. "I've seen enough of it in my time. Getting up in the middle of the night—sometimes two or three times on the same night—simply because

someone who would have been quite all right on dry land feels as though he were going to die at any moment. Cruising's all right for the navigation officer. He knows his chart by heart. But what ordinary folk with quiet comfortable homes on land should want coming to sea for no reason at all beats me."

"Yes," said Stephen. "I suppose a ship's doctor does get pretty sick of it."

"Oh, no, don't imagine," Dr. Jarvis remarked hurriedly, "that mine isn't an interesting job. It's fascinating, absolutely fascinating. Just sitting back and observing little things. I knew all about Mr. Brentano before he came to me. Before he opened his mouth, I said to him, 'You're going to tell me that every morning you've got a sort of headache along the back of the neck, and you can feel your heart pumping right up in your throat. That's blood pressure,' I said. I got out my sphygmometer and of course it was."

"How did you know?" Stephen asked.

"Experience," replied the doctor blandly. "Waist line and chin line. Plenty of men run to a corporation after forty. But it's when the chin begins to disappear under layers of fat that it's dangerous. I'm always on the look out for that sort of thing."

"How do I come off," asked Stephen, lifting his head to show the doctor the line of his jaw.

Dr. Jarvis looked at him. "You'd do better with more rest, too. Your trouble is you've got no fat to fall back on. You ought to sit back on your oars for a bit, and put on about a stone. Then you'd have something solid in reserve."

Stephen tried to tell him that he didn't want to put on a stone. But Dr. Jarvis on his favourite topic was difficult to stop. "Look at Mr. Brentano's friend, Doyle, for instance," he said. "Came to me because his daughter was ill. You'd say to look at him that he was a bit of a wreck, wouldn't you. But

he isn't. He's found out what suits him and he sticks to it. If he started taking exercise or anything foolish like that, he'd go to pieces in a moment. As it is he's good for twenty years."

"How is Miss Doyle?" Stephen enquired.

"She's a temperamental sort of creature," Dr. Jarvis replied sadly. "Women are always difficult. You never know for certain what's the matter with them. I had one case last trip complained of shooting pains inside, and I gave her bicarbonate and bismuth and that sort of thing to settle her stomach. But she got worse and just lay there writhing. I thought I should have to operate, when she told me she wanted to see her husband. In a few moments he came out smiling all over his face. His wife had told him what the trouble was. She owed a bill for a hundred and forty pounds to a dress-maker in London, before coming away. Of course, the husband was so relieved by then that he'd have paid double. She was up and about the next day."

"Shamming," observed Stephen.

"Not a bit of it," corrected Dr. Jarvis hastily. "Nervous dyspepsia. Nine women out of ten have it. Miss Doyle's got it now."

"Badly?"

"Badly enough," agreed the doctor. "I can't do anything for it. She's got to do that herself. Remove the cause and she'll be all right again."

The conversation flagged, when suddenly the doctor's eye lit up.

"Do you play cards?" he asked.

"There isn't a four," Stephen replied.

"I wasn't referring to bridge," Dr. Jarvis assured him. "When I've been working all day I don't like having to work at cards all the evening as well. I meant a little game of two-handed bezique."

THE NOISE woke Stephen immediately. It was loud and drawn out like the lowing of a mechanical cow. Though he had not heard it before, he knew it at once for the ship's fog-horn. He put on the light beside the bunk and got up to look out of the porthole. He could see nothing except his own face, absurdly anxious-looking, staring back at him. He put the light out and discovered that it was not the light that was at fault. There was nothing to see. Nothing. Outside, a close white screen had descended, cutting out everything, even the sea. It was colder, too. Stephen had to wipe the mist that his breath made off the surface of the glass. The fog-horn sounded again. The noise of it came drilling its way through the walls of the cabin as though they were made of paper. The motion of the vessel had changed subtly since bedtime. The throb of the engines when he had last felt them had been harsh and metallic. The ship seemed now to throb as gently and humanly as though it had a heart of flesh and blood. It was travelling at half speed.

The fog was right down on them. They were in the thick of it. He felt that he wanted to know more about this white shutter that had been drawn, tightly and unasked, across the window. He opened the porthole, hurting his hands on the massive brass screws. As soon as he had swung back the thick circular pane the pale tenuous fingers of the mist, that seemed tangible and intelligent, began to grope their way into the cabin. He closed the porthole, leaving the wisps and curls of mist, disembodied and rapidly disappearing, floating before his eyes. It was chilly and damp. The fog, moreover, had

brought a palpable and oppressive stillness with it, as though everything outside were being slowly and methodically smothered beneath the white blanket of the fog. Just as noise can penetrate, so too can silence. The *Tusitala*, even with its engines gently turning over at half speed, was making a noisy and unnatural intrusion into this world of stillness and sleep. For no reason that he could discover Stephen found himself thinking of Miss Doyle. He wondered how she, a creature of mood and temperament, was withstanding the pressure of the quiet forces that were pressing on the ship from without.

At the same moment, Captain Curly, clothed in a vivid green and purple striped pair of pyjamas that had been a present from his affectionate but ailing wife—he noticed that as her sight got worse the colours of the things she gave him got brighter and more blazing—was sitting up on his elbow drinking tea. Every time the tea touched a damaged tooth in his lower jaw he winced. And every time the fog-horn sounded he winced just as perceptibly.

Captain Curly hated fog. It was the one thing that really frightened him. It disturbed the placid parson-like tenor of his days. The fact that he had emerged from so many fogs, sailing out on to seas of unbelievable repose and calm, leaving the fog behind as easily as night is left behind at daybreak, did nothing to reassure him.

He told himself that "it," an undefined, unthinkable "it," was bound to come sooner or later; and every safe emergence from the ordeal left him the more convinced that disaster was approaching, remorseless and inevitable. "Next time," he said to himself; "next time." His record as a navigator was a byword. It was blameless. But in a fog it is hard to apportion blame. Emphatically he did not like risks. Those risks that were avoidable he avoided. And those risks which Providence imposed on him he resented and feared.

His only personal misdemeanour during the whole of his time at sea had been to foul a hawser in Cherbourg harbour and tip a vociferous and gesticulating Frenchman who was standing too near the edge into the water twenty feet below. Even then the Captain had argued the question with himself, all the way to Valparaiso, as to whether it was the fault of a badly slung hawser or the Frenchman's own unaided folly that had brought about the accident.

What in particular the Captain dreaded was fog in the Channel. Not that in the ordinary way there was anything to be alarmed at there—except the scum of fishing fleets that lay in the track of more important craft. But now that the tussle for Atlantic supremacy had become so fierce there were all kinds of dangers to be encountered in the shipping lanes. And whenever fog was reported the Captain in the loneliness of his little cabin could always imagine one of those accursed twenty-five-knot liners with a bow wave like a bolster, driving on a full speed and a bit over, at the command of a master intent on keeping an impossible and disastrous schedule, that had been drawn up on the order of a shipping company's inhuman publicity agent on land.

It was four-fifteen; ordinarily he would not be called for another three-and-a-quarter hours. But he always got up whenever there was fog about. As soon as the horn went at night his man would swing himself out of his bunk and proceed to make him tea.

Captain Curly slid on to the floor and dressed, feeling bowed down with foreboding and responsibility. Not that there was anything he could actually do when he got up on the bridge. He could only stand about uneasily looking angrily at the wall of white into which they were everlastingly driving; a veil which wrapped itself round them as steadily and effortlessly as they broke through it.

He would sit in the chart-room drowsing upright in a hard chair while out on the bridge everything went on exactly as if he were not there. But in some obscure way he felt that it was better than being in his bed. The bridge of the *Tusitala* was cruelly exposed. The glass had not been carried far enough round on the starboard side and the wind came straight through like a train through a tunnel. Captain Curly had reported it to the owners several times, without effect. Tonight the bridge was cold, damp and opaque. The Captain shivered as he went out there.

Everything was as peaceful and orderly as in a chapel. The sailor standing motionless by the wheel, supporting himself lightly on the stationary spokes, with his eyes fixed on the face of the gyroscopic compass might have been a priest intent upon his work. He had the nobility of a man apart.

The mate had been expecting to see the Captain upon the bridge and was ready for him. He had arranged another chair in readiness in the chart-room.

"Anything?" enquired the Captain briefly on his arrival.

"Nothing, sir," replied the mate, and lapsed into silence. He had sailed with Captain Curly for nearly four years and they understood each other perfectly. The Captain considered the mate an excellent seaman on the ordinary business side of navigation, but found him somewhat lacking in those social and conversational gifts calculated to relieve the tedium of long voyages. It irritated him that the man played draughts and not bridge.

Captain Curly had been sitting in the chart-room for perhaps twenty minutes when he suddenly started nervously. He sat quite still holding the sides of his chair and listening. Somewhere outside behind those screens of fog that were surrounding the ship there had been the noise of another fog-

horn, faint and feeble but distinct. As he strained his ears his own ship's fog-horn blared out, extinguishing everything but itself.

He went outside. He had not been mistaken. The look-out man isolated in his remote and icy world had heard it too and reported it. His words had come down like a warning from the clouds.

Captain Curly and the mate stood there silent and waiting for the other ship to announce itself. It had crept up noiselessly as a ghost. There was not a sound, except for the steady rush of the bow wave and the throb of the engines which by familiarity had resolved themselves by now into what was merely a thicker kind of silence. Then in the interval of their horn came the note, bleating and clear, of the other horn.

Captain Curly hated the fog because he could not understand it. Wind and high seas were enemies that he could appreciate, foes that he could combat and defeat. Icebergs, it is true, came up like assassins in the dark and thrust their knife into you. They could be avoided, however, at the cost of a few hours' détour. But trying to avoid fog was like trying to dodge bad luck.

The lamp in the forepeak in front of him glowed faint and insubstantial like a tired star. Captain Curly looked at it and cursed it. It was rather ridiculous on a ship the size of the *Tusitala*; like a glow-worm on the front of a bus. A man, incorporeal as a shadow, moved across the deck and was lost to sight. Captain Curly tried to follow him with his eyes but abandoned the attempt. The fog was worse if anything, thicker, and apparently coming towards them with a movement of its own, swirling and sweeping. It was a night like this that Captain Curly seemed to have been dreading ever since he went to sea.

He told himself repeatedly that on every other ship in this opaque wonderland, that stretched God knows how far across the surface of the water, there were nervous, sober-minded, safety-loving men like himself trying just as hard to avoid meeting him. But he could not help feeling that among so many it would be strange if there were not one who was a fool. He was oppressed by the feeling that the *Tusitala* was no longer a free agent with a will of her own, but was pressing toward an appointed place in that obscure white gloom ahead as unhesitatingly and inevitably as if she had been running on rails.

The cry of the look-out man when it reached them was choking and unhelpful. He had spent too long already cut off from his fellow men, in that upper atmosphere of rushing white cloud. Cold—cold unknowable on land—had bitten into his body and drugged his mind. When he tried to shout, his lips were hard and inflexible like strips of leather. His cheeks, too, were fixed into lines of frozen fatigue. But that was not the only reason why he failed to warn Captain Curly of the disaster he had been awaiting stoically and resigned through the years.

It was on him so suddenly that he saw nothing before they hit it. It was like bumping into a footstool in the dark. From nowhere—as though Venus-like it had sprung from the waves—there appeared the mast head of a small ship, so small in fact that the look-out man damned and blasted it for trying to hide from him. It rose out of the sea in front of him, and the *Tusitala* with the lazy movement of a giant put her weight against it and pushed into it. The tremor that ran through the ship was scarcely more than when a vessel is brought hard against the side in dock. But to Captain Curly, who had taken the *Tusitala* round all manner of narrow corners gently and unscraped, it seemed as though the whole skeleton of the ship

was flying asunder. The air was suddenly full of cries and then as suddenly silent again. The mate put over the engine-room telegraph and the *Tusitala* ceased to vibrate.

As he ran out of the shelter of the bridge and peered down into the dim water below, the Captain saw a boat scarcely bigger than a pilot-boat with her upper work all crushed in. The boat was so stout and squat that it lay too far below for him to see much, but a luminescent glow that spread itself over the deck told him that he was looking down into a heap of freshly caught fish. It was all just as he had feared. He had run down one of those accursed fishing craft that carried a syren like a tin whistle and littered the ocean like children playing in the streets. Through the gloom Captain Curly appraised the damage as well as he could judge. It didn't seem to amount to much, not more than broken bulwarks and a side stove in like an empty tin that had been badly opened.

In the savagery of the moment he wished that the damage were twice as much. That the *Tusitala* flat out on its sixteen knots and with a following sea had made its way like a spear clean through the middle of the miserable obstruction. The impact had not even fixed the smaller boat across the *Tusitala's* bows. It floated free, and seemed merely to cling to the side of its assailant. But Captain Curly knew perfectly well that he had done enough to sink it.

On the deck of the fishing boat sombre forms, mere blobs in the surrounding blackness, could be seen gathering round the gap in the side. The noise of shouting broke out loud and angry. Again it was promptly drowned by the *Tusitala's* horn that continued to sound with the regularity of a church bell. One man detached himself from the rest and the Captain could see that he was shaking his fist up at the black wall of the *Tusitala* that towered above him. Maddened by the implica-

tion Captain Curly shook his fist back at the obscure figure in the gloom below.

The order to put out the boat had been automatic and already the distinctive groan and squeak of the davits could be heard. It gave Captain Curly a feeling of pride and affection that he should be the governing force in something that even in adversity worked with clockwork-smoothness and regularity.

Well upon time the *Tusitala's* boat fully manned put away from the side. Captain Curly, with the immobility that responsibility properly shouldered imposes upon a commander, waited silent upon the bridge for a report of the *Tusitala's* own damage. Anything, as he well knew, might have happened, and even still be happening, somewhere in front of the old-fashioned, massive bulkhead of his own ship.

Stephen was awake when the crash came. It flung him so sharply forward in his bed that his head hit hard against the wall of the cabin. He heard nothing more for five or ten seconds, and then he was aware of people running, apparently urgently and in alarm, up towards the bow. He could feel, too, that the *Tusitala's* engines were no longer running.

He was quite calm and was pleased with himself for being calm. He put the light on and was relieved to find that it still worked. No more than a slight sea was running and the cabin floor was level and steady. He was relieved that the *Tusitala* had retained that measure of buoyancy after her head crash. She was not, as far as he could judge, in danger of plunging by the bow in some unstoppable, unthinkable descent. The noise of the footsteps had ceased too by now, and Stephen stood motionless wondering if he had not been deceived by it all. Then he heard the sound of a boat being lowered from the davits.

A man does not need to have been at sea before to recognise such a sound. Every fragment of it, the creak and squeak of ropes passing through the stiff blocks, the noise of heavy feet stepping on thin boards, the bump of something hitting the side of the ship as it was lowered, the slap when it reached the water, told him beyond any possibility of doubt or confusion, what was happening outside. He slipped into a pair of flannel trousers, put on his raincoat and went out into the alleyway. There was a strange group gathered there.

There were two people whom he had not, so far as he knew, ever seen before. One was a little middle-aged man in a night shirt and the other a woman of about forty in flaming silk pyjamas. The incongruity struck Stephen as they stood looking alternately at each other and up and down the alleyway. When they saw Stephen they both said at once, "Did you think you heard something?" They implied from the manner of their question that they would prefer an accident to being mistaken and ridiculous.

A moment later the door of Mr. Brentano's cabin opened and Mr. Brentano in a purple silk dressing-gown and scarlet Moorish slippers appeared. He was a little fluffy and dishevelled, but obviously and wholeheartedly master of the situation.

"All right, all right," he said hurrying up. "It's nothing to be alarmed about. Leave it to the officers. It's what they're here for."

"What do you think it was?" asked the lady in pyjamas.

"I should think we hit something," said Mr. Brentano.

"Oh, what a good thing," the lady replied. "I was afraid something had hit us."

The logic of her remark was glossed over and ignored in the midst of the essential drama of the situation.

A steward without a coat, walking like a man in a road race,

swept past them trying to look as though he were not hurrying. "One moment gentlemen, please," he said when they addressed him and he was lost to sight.

"Have you seen Miss Doyle?" Stephen asked Mr. Brentano.

Mr. Brentano admitted that he had not.

"Let's go and find her," he said.

They went along to her cabin; the door beside it stood open, slamming idly backwards and forwards in time with the motion of the ship. "Hello," said Mr. Brentano. "That's Doyle's cabin. I wonder where he's gone." The bed had not been slept in and the cover was turned back, but there was no trace of Mr. Doyle. "Probably gone to be sick," said Mr. Brentano, and gave Stephen a wink.

Miss Doyle was evidently up and about; she answered as soon as they knocked. She did not look in the least alarmed, merely surprised that her friends should knock her up at that time of the night.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing to be alarmed about, little lady," Mr. Brentano reassured her, trying to squeeze the hand that gripped the edge of the door. "Just a little bump in the dark, that's all. Come out and watch the fun."

"Just a minute," said Miss Doyle and closed the door in their faces. When she reappeared she was wearing a dressing-gown and had pushed her long hair down inside. "Where's father?" she asked.

"He's probably about already finding out how things are?" Mr. Brentano told her.

"Are we sinking?" asked Miss Doyle. She said it as though she hoped they were.

"Should I be standing here if we were?" Mr. Brentano enquired sweetly.

Stephen could see how much he was enjoying the rôle he was playing. Of course he was as anxious as anyone. He was in his heart terrified of what any moment might produce. But to see him standing there, his brick-red face wreathed in smiles, and his smiles punctuated by his irresistible winks, he might—except for certain unorthodoxies of costume—have been proposing a pleasant trip ashore. At that moment he was able to appreciate the true excellence of the man.

The three of them went back to join the others. More had arrived by this time. The lady in pyjamas, now covered by a fur coat, was still the spokesman of the group. "Oh, Mr. Brentano," she said. "Oughtn't we to do something?"

"Yes," said Mr. Brentano dutifully acting his part. "Let's order some drinks." He got up to ring for the steward.

The steward came, obviously annoyed at what he chose to regard as an improper response to an important occasion. He was a family man with religious tendencies. He would have preferred to see them huddled together singing "O God, our help in ages past." In those circumstances he would have known what to do. He would have put a brave face on it and led the singing. But in the presence of indifference, he did not know how he was expected to act. He therefore turned sullen, said that the bar was closed, but promised in a doubtful and discouraging manner to do what he could.

Conversation flagged for a moment except for the lady in pyjamas who, in a moment of utter and oppressive silence, thought she heard a scream. She was convinced in her belief when a moment later Dr. Jarvis, doing what he called hurrying, went ambling past carrying a black, surgical-looking bag.

Miss Doyle was sitting by herself staring vacantly with wide, dark eyes about her. Stephen crossed over and sat by her.

"Mr. MacFadyen," she said. "Will you do something for me?"

“Certainly.”

“See if father’s about, will you? He’s probably looking for me.”

Stephen had decided that he did not care where her father was and that he did not want his company when he was found. But he went into the alleyway and made a pretence of looking for him. To search for anyone in a ship is like searching for a slip of paper in a strange desk full of pigeon-holes. There were doors everywhere to right and left of him, stretching away into a dwindling and narrowing perspective. Mr. Doyle was nowhere about.

When Stephen got back to the group he found the chief steward already there. He was wearing a long blue overcoat that made him look almost nautical. His smile, perpetual and undimmed, beamed forth above it. “The Captain’s compliments,” he was saying, “and will you please go back to your cabins. There’s not the slightest cause for alarm. We just scraped a fishing boat in the fog. That’s all. The Captain said we shan’t lose any time over it.”

“What was that scream I heard?” asked the woman in the fur coat and pyjamas.

“Can’t say, I’m sure, madam,” the chief steward apologised. “It was nobody on this ship.”

“Then it must have been a foreign scream,” she replied. It was obvious that she felt she gained some kudos by having heard the scream and she did not mean to relinquish it without a struggle. “It was quite sudden. Like someone in pain,” she said in an effort to prove its genuineness.

While the lady was defending her scream, Mr. Brentano had got hold of Miss Doyle’s hand and was stroking it gently. When he stopped for a moment, Miss Doyle withdrew it from him and let it rest in her lap; and when he went to take it again Miss Doyle moved away from him. “Don’t worry, my

dear," he was saying, dropping his voice affectionately. "Don't get all worked up."

"It's father I'm worrying about," Miss Doyle replied. "Do you think anything's happened to him?"

"He'll turn up all right," Mr. Brentano kept on saying. "He's probably found a nice comfortable corner for himself."

"Mr. MacFadyen," said Miss Doyle, seeing Stephen looking in her direction, "you didn't hear about anything that might mean man overboard or anything. Did you?"

"Nothing," said Stephen briefly. "Absolutely nothing." He felt there was no cause for anxiety on Mr. Doyle's behalf. He was constitutionally one of those creatures always on the brink of mishap and for ever escaping it. On this occasion he did not disappoint. Miss Doyle, Mr. Brentano and Stephen saw him at the same moment.

He was coming down the staircase by the safe but primitive means of clinging on to the banisters. The ship was scarcely moving. But he didn't for a moment release his grip. He was in his pyjamas. And over them very tight and back to front was strapped his life-saving apparatus. When he saw everyone looking at him he suddenly tripped and lost his balance. He did not fall, however. His life saver worked perfectly. One of the little straps on it caught on to a knob on the banisters. Mr. Doyle hung there, helpless and protesting.

SHORTLY AFTER six the fog lifted. It grew suddenly lighter. It was as though a wet cloth had been wiped across a dirty window. Things hitherto invisible and forgotten sprang every minute into existence. The ship detached itself from the grey and yellow darkness all around and came to life. Rigging showed itself and the crow's-nest which since the disaster had been grimly ignored became once again a centre of intelligence and an abode of life. With the coming of daylight the sea existed once more. For half an hour there was still no sign of the battered ship, though the sound of shouts continued to come at intervals out of the lessening darkness. Then a point, a conglomeration of darkness in a lightening world, became visible. Captain Curly and the mate—they were standing side by side—could discern a huddle of small fishing boats. One of them was lying on its side like a boat left high and dry on the shingle. .

It was very small with a high narrow funnel and dwindling sides. At the sight of it Captain Curly winced. He felt as the driver of an omnibus must feel when he has smashed up his vehicle because of a dog on the highway. Taking his binoculars he endeavoured to distinguish the name of the culprit and victim. It was the *Carmen*; the name stood out in letters a foot high.

Through his binoculars he could see moreover exactly what his own ship had done. It had cut clean through the bulwark, splintering the old wood easily and disdainfully, demolishing the ship's boat which now looked like a toy that had been trodden on. It must have done still more damage

below the water-line. For the *Carmen* was now suspiciously low in the water and the slow swell—there were no waves to speak of now—came flooding through the broken bulwark with monotonous regularity. So far as he could discover there were no more than five people on the *Carmen*. They stood staring stupidly at the grey bulk of their aggressor as it grew every moment more distinct in the lessening fog.

Captain Curly inspected them through his glasses. They were the usual nautical riff-raff, more like pirates than honest seamen: in that they resembled the sailors of all other and lesser nations. As he looked, a face surmounted by what looked like an enormous white bath-towel came into full view and the Captain could see that it was a man heavily bandaged about the head. The bandage was evidently not thick enough. For already there were stains that appeared as long smudges of brown: in a brighter light they would have been crimson. The figure stood there swaying with the roll of the boat. Without warning it slipped and fell. Other figures ran towards it. The Captain saw them pick the man up, inert and awkward like a roll of carpet, and carry him inside. Then he turned away himself.

There was nothing that he could do himself that the mate could not do just as well. He suddenly realised how tired he was; tired and old. The only things in life that he wanted were a hot bath and a meal. It seemed years since he had had either. He thought for a moment of his wife sitting comfortably at home in Almeira Road, Birkenhead, and her comfort and safety made him feel cross and resentful.

Hitching his coat up at the shoulders, he told the mate that he was going below. The mate was trustworthy and Captain Curly proposed to do the proper thing and trust him. As he went out he had to pass the wireless room. He saw the pink smooth face of the operator, and thought of the messages he

would be shortly sending out. There would be headlines in every paper. He cursed the young man.

The mate was pleased, he was flattered. He liked being trusted with tasks no matter how onerous. A man of no mental reserve, he dreaded having nothing imperative and immediate to do. On quiet days at sea he was invariably fretful and unhappy. During the war, however, he had been for three days in charge of a blazing ammunition ship: and those three days, before he had finally ordered the crew into the boat, reluctantly following himself a few minutes before the bonfire became a heap of fireworks, still seemed to him one of the treats and privileges of a life dulled by routine.

The first boat that the *Tusitala* had put out had done nothing except row in circles finding nothing. The boat that the mate ordered off made its way directly and easily. The air was practically clear. The glow above was concentrated upon one spot which was the sun. There was even a breeze.

Captain Curly came back to the bridge. "You'll have me sent for of course," he said, "as soon as we get into Lisbon. I don't want them," he waved his hand in the direction of the lopsided *Carmen*, "getting their story in first. I've wirelessly our agent. He's coming to meet us. But he's probably told everyone in Lisbon what's happened. Very talkative race the Portuguese."

As he went below the sun came out.

The *Tusitala* steamed into Lisbon with the *Carmen* following under her own power. One of the sailors on board the latter had erected a barricade of what looked like box-ends over the gap in the side. They fitted very well and did not appear noticeably more fragile and ramshackle than the rest of the ship. Someone, possibly the emergency carpenter himself, was playing a concertina. Faint strains of it came drifting up. The mate heard them with displeasure.

As the day cleared still further the mate could see the Portuguese coastline. He had been in Lisbon once, seven years before, and had lost his wallet in a cabaret there. He had not even enjoyed the cabaret to which he had gone against his better judgment. The memory of that wallet still came between him and his sleep. And as the hills that encircled the town came into view he eyed them without affection. The tide was against them, and the fresh grey water flowing into the Atlantic held the *Tusitala* back as though it had been fastened to something. It gave the ship a sharp, uneasy pitch. The pitch disturbed Mr. Doyle in his cabin and made him brace his toes against the bedrail in a vain effort to check it.

Coming out bumpily with the tide, was a small ship surmounted by its own smoke. The smoke hung over it like a mushroom. "They're using cheap coal," reflected the mate and studied the ship through his binoculars. It was as he had suspected. It was the Harbour Authority's boat. The agent had talked. At this moment he was standing alongside the Captain of the Authority's boat. The agent wanted to get a quiet, undisturbed version of the story before other people—the owners of the *Carmen*, and so forth—came butting in.

As soon as the mate was sure, he sent below for the Captain. Captain Curly was sitting up drinking tea when the message reached him. He got up and shaved. When he had shaved, he poured a little bright yellow brilliantine on to his head, and combed his hair into a firm and aggressive forepeak. The brilliantine smelt like all the flowers in all the gardens in the world, and stuck like glue. By the time the Harbour Authority's boat was alongside, there was not a smarter, sprucer sailorman than Captain Curly anywhere on the sea.

The agent clambered aboard and was received formally by the Captain, who had gone to the point of wearing his great-coat with its innumerable buttons and his kid gloves. The

agent respected the Captain. He saw power and recognised it. The Captain did not respect the agent. He saw merely anxiety over his job and a desire to please. Moreover he did not like the look of him. The agent was a small cat-like creature with an alarming show of teeth when he smiled. They were not good teeth. They were so broken and spattered with gold that they glittered like a jeweller's window. His hair, which was black, was very thin and so arranged that it trailed across the top of his skull like creeper over a high roof. He wore a small piece of brightly coloured ribbon indicative of some national service which if he had not performed it would have left Portugal in an even worse hole than she now found herself. His shoes were as small and pointed as a girl's. Captain Curly looked at him and wondered how anyone could seriously imagine that a foreigner (on the matter of looks alone) was the equal of an Englishman.

"Good morning, Captain. Nice morning," said the agent in a quick sing-song voice. "Was something wrong is it?"

The Captain explained.

The agent looked surprised. "But please," he said, "I mean, you, the ship, the *Tusitala*, she sails? She keeps her time?"

"They report to me," replied the Captain grandly, suggesting that there were any number of people who did the reporting, "that the *Tusitala* is undamaged. We shall go straight on."

The agent bowed and smiled. "Just so," he said, "I knew it could not have been otherwise. I will make a report. You need not delay. You will hear no more of it."

The Captain grunted. He disliked facile optimism. "One of their men got all smashed up. I had him brought on board."

"On here?" The agent looked alarmed.

The Captain nodded. "The ship's surgeon saw to him."

"I hope," replied the agent, "that you instructed him to do nothing? These men are used to misfortune. Watch their hands. Ten fingers are so rare. One goes often when dragging in the nets. It is the great weight and the cold. The ropes are knives. Sometimes the sailor, he gets his foot entangled. He is not seen again. His boots are heavy, and it is dark. Many are lost that way. They are used to pain and misfortune. But a doctor . . . !" The agent shuddered at the thought. "It makes them believe that they are ill. They use no doctors themselves."

Captain Curly pondered for a moment. Perhaps there was something to be said for the agent's attitude. It was certainly simpler. But the Captain was a humane man. He could not leave an injured man without the best help that could be had. He knew that by his own light he had done the right thing. Nevertheless, he sent for Dr. Jarvis.

The agent was still talking excitedly. "They are everywhere, the boats. No one knows how many. When the pilchards come the sea is full of them. They fill the ocean. Some are not fit. They fill with water. They sink. Every fisherman's wife is a widow . . ."

The Captain stopped listening.

Dr. Jarvis took an astonishingly long time to come. When he arrived he looked as though he had just been roused out of a heavy sleep. He had been attending to the wounded man. He seemed surprised to see two people.

"How's the patient?" Captain Curly asked briefly.

Dr. Jarvis looked up. "Meaning the sailor?" he asked.

The Captain nodded.

"To tell you the truth," Dr. Jarvis admitted, "I haven't quite satisfied myself yet. I rather think it's something internal. The head wound is nothing really. Perhaps the spleen is ruptured. It's extremely difficult to do anything, because he

won't answer. He's in pain. I hope to make further tests."

"Please, please," the agent protested. "Is it necessary? The time. The trouble, the money. The *Tusitala*. The voyage. The passengers. Would it not be better to put him into the ship I came in. He would then," he added with momentary inspiration, "be cared for among his own people."

Captain Curly hesitated. There was certainly something in what he said. "Is the man all right to be transported?" he asked.

Dr. Jarvis was doubtful about giving a decision on that point, but hopeful that what might prove to be a troublesome case could be got off their hands. "It's hard to say," he confessed. "He's a tough sort of bird. Probably it's nothing. One can't say. Let senhor . . . senhor,"—he indicated the agent with his hand—"ask him," he suggested, brightening.

The Captain agreed.

Dr. Jarvis accompanied the agent to where the man lay on a table. Someone had arranged a layer of mattresses, covering them, with a sailor's foresight, with a piece of canvas. The fisherman was a young man with thick black hair and a dark olive skin. Beneath his skin the blood seemed to have receded, leaving his complexion pale and transparent. It had the hue of a wax fruit. His eyes were closed and a thin trickle of blood ran from his scalp wound and filled the corner of his mouth.

"What the devil's the matter with you?" the agent asked, prodding at him with his thumb.

"Leave me alone, I'm dying," replied the wounded man.

"He says the pain is better now, thank you," translated the agent. "He is grateful for your treatment. He would prefer to be moved among his friends."

"Splendid," exclaimed Dr. Jarvis, rubbing his hands. "I'll tell the Captain."

While the Captain was making his full statement to the

company's agent the injured sailor, groaning all the time, was lowered over the side of the *Tusitala* and was stowed away out of sight on the Harbour boat. Then the agent presented his compliments to the Captain, asked to be remembered personally to the directors of the Line in London, trusted that the incident had not delayed him too badly and wished him a pleasant voyage. The *Tusitala* turned about and went out on the tide.

The wireless operator, to everyone's delight, sent out a brief message ending: "No damage Stop Am proceeding Stop Curly"

BECAUSE OF THE unsettled night everyone slept late. Mr. Brentano rang for his steward and told him that if he did anything to disturb him he'd have him thrown overboard. Mr. Doyle protested feebly that he was in no mood for food and that he would prefer to be left to himself. Gratia had breakfast in bed and sent the steward to find her a book. Stephen got up an hour late. Towards eleven o'clock they all met in the saloon. Mr. Brentano was sitting in a big wicker chair, a glass of whisky in his hand.

He greeted Stephen with a shout of heartiness. "Well," he asked, "did you have a good night?"

"I thought we were in for it," Stephen replied.

Mr. Brentano winked meaningly. "So did old Doyle," he said. There was a pause. "You know old Doyle wasn't always like that. He must have been quite a lad in his youth. Lets little bits slip out now and then when he's canned. About a Malay

who tried to knife him for taking up with his woman, and that sort of thing. Laid the Malay out good and proper. Plenty of spunk to do that. You can never tell with these Malays. They're as treacherous as polecats. They carry a *kris*." Mr. Brentano began to draw a series of little twists in the air with his hand. "Nasty wavy blade like a crooked razor. It makes a hole six inches across just by being shoved in. Saw a man die that way once. You'd have thought he'd been harpooned. I knew his sister."

Stephen was about to say something but he was uncertain whether the conversation went on from the point about the unfortunate man's sister, about the man himself, or about Mr. Doyle. But Mr. Brentano put him out of doubt. As soon as he saw that Stephen was still listening he stepped in quickly before Stephen had a chance to speak.

"It was marriage that put old Doyle on the rails. Remarkable woman she must have been. Properly fell for old Doyle, she did. She was a planter's daughter engaged to a chap in the Customs Department. Nice fellow. He's a Senior Commissioner now. Must look him up sometime. He had a head like a nail. I've seen him stretched out flat at two in the morning and down at the harbour by ten as fresh as a school-girl. He'd have been a good husband. But when she met Doyle she just chucked the Customs fellow and married our friend. My God! Just think of Doyle as a lady-killer. Do you know if she hadn't died when Gratia was a baby I reckon he would be on his feet now."

"How long ago did Mrs. Doyle die?" asked Stephen.

Brentano paused. "Well Gratia's nineteen or just on. So that fixes it. She was nearly twenty years younger than Doyle. You ought to hear old Doyle talk about her. Absolutely worshipped her. Can't understand what she saw in him. Of course he was different then, you know. But never really my

idea of a man. Feckless, that's what he is. Never put his back into things. That's why that hotel of his just went to pieces. Nobody could get anything there. He'd always run out of things; ice generally. And if you tried to spend the night there the plumbing had always just gone wrong and the cook had left. I've known Doyle sit for a couple of hours on end listening to the gramophone, too bone lazy to ask what they were doing in the kitchen. That's where his wife came in. She used to raise hell with the servants. One of those quiet dignified women she was, by all reports. She could outslang a navvy if she found a mat hadn't been shaken. The Excelsior was absolutely spotless in her time. You could eat off the floor in any of the rooms. Doyle says that Gratia's getting just like her mother."

"Who looks after the hotel now?" Stephen asked.

"No one," said Brentano. "It's closed. Best thing old Doyle ever did when he put up the shutters. Nice situation though, right down by the water. Found a drowned Chink, I remember, washed right up on to the dining-room steps. The Excelsior could have been made into a gold-mine. Doyle sunk seven thousand into it. Now it's in ruins. Half of it fell in the harbour; that's where I come in."

"How?" Stephen enquired.

"Mortgage," said Mr. Brentano briefly. "Shh. Here they come."

Through the door of the saloon came Mr. Doyle and his daughter. Mr. Doyle was wearing Gratia's scarf round his neck; evidently it was chilly on deck. Mr. Brentano caught sight of them the moment they entered. He shouted across to them "to come and join the fun." Gratia held back but Mr. Doyle came across smiling delightedly. So pleased indeed was Mr. Doyle to see Stephen that Gratia was left alone to the attentions of Mr. Brentano. Stephen noticed that he fussed around her like an aunt.

"Mr. . . ." Mr. Doyle began, bending low over the table towards Stephen.

"MacFadyen," Stephen reminded him.

"Mr. Fadden," Mr. Doyle went on, "my daughter tells me that you went out of your way to be kind to her again last night. Uncommonly nice of you. I won't forget it in a hurry."

"Well, what about me?" Mr. Brentano enquired. "What about yours truly? Where do I come in?"

Mr. Doyle faced Mr. Brentano with agitation. "Please," he protested, "you know I didn't mean that. Nothing I could do would make up for everything you've done for me. For us, that is. You know how grateful I am. You know how grateful we both are. Aren't we, Gratia?"

Gratia coloured slightly and played with the fastener on her glove, clipping and unclipping it with a sharp snapping noise. Even Mr. Brentano seemed a trifle taken aback. But not for long. "Who rescued the Captain last night?" he asked jovially.

Mr. Doyle looked bewildered.

"You know what I mean," said Brentano, winking across to Stephen. "Who dived off the bridge last night with all his clothes on to rescue the Captain?"

"Really, I'm afraid . . ." Mr. Doyle began.

"Who kept his head when the ship was sinking and got the women and children into the boats?"

Stephen had ceased to watch Brentano and was looking at Gratia out of the corner of his eye. She was sitting very still and was quite pale. Her eyes were fixed on the unsuspecting Mr. Brentano. He looked up and saw her.

"You're a beast," she said fiercely. "I suppose you think that father tried to bolt for it last night. Well he didn't, see!"

"Please, please, Gratia dear. . . . Please don't take any notice of her, Brentano." Mr. Doyle was roused to action.

"Gratia, dear, you shouldn't speak that way. Mr. Brentano was only joking. Really he was. Weren't you, Brentano?"

"Of course. No offence meant. None at all, I assure you."

"There, dear, you see. You mustn't be so impulsive. Mr. Brentano's an old friend. He understands. But some people wouldn't. You mustn't make bad blood between two old pals." Mr. Doyle leant over and tried to slap Mr. Brentano convincingly on the back.

"That's enough. Let's drop it," said Mr. Brentano, edging away. He turned towards Gratia and put his hand on her knee. "It was only a bit of my fun," he said.

"It's not my idea of fun," she replied. She got up quickly, and for a moment she stood looking down on him. Then she went quickly from the room. He gazed after her in astonishment. Mr. Doyle was terribly distressed. "Brentano," he implored. "Don't judge her by this, will you? She's still upset. She's not herself yet. Really she isn't. I'll go after her."

"You can go to Hell for all I care," Mr. Brentano told him.

"No, no, please, Brentano," he began.

"Oh, for the Lord's sake go and find her if you want to. We won't touch your drink."

Mr. Doyle went awkwardly towards the door. His walk was almost as unsteady when he was sober as when drunk. He swayed alarmingly, and kept looking back over his shoulder.

When he had gone through the door Mr. Brentano turned towards Stephen. "What a girl," he said admiringly, almost smacking his lips over the word. "I like 'em with a bit of spirit. Poor old Doyle. It's a disgusting sight when a man loses his nerve. He's done for."

ON THE FOLLOWING day the wind dropped. Nothing but a gentle breeze caught at the *Tusitala's* festoon of smoke and draped it over the surface of the water. The awnings were drying. The decks began to look white again. Even the door leading into the saloon from the weather side was unlocked. The motion, now that they were out of the bay, was slighter and the ship seemed more comfortable on the sea. Only the temperature remained obstinately low and northern. Otherwise there was a distinct breath of the Mediterranean in the air. The sunlight sparkled on everything. The whole seascape might have just been washed.

The Captain saw Stephen at once, and sauntered good humouredly over to him. "Nearing Gib.," he said. There was something irreverent to Stephen's ears in this abbreviation of Gibraltar, like calling the Matterhorn the Mat. It seemed almost as unseemly on Captain Curly's tongue as slang on the lips of a bishop.

"It will be abeam at about ten o'clock," the Captain explained as though it were the *Tusitala* which was stationary, rooted into the earth's solid foundations, and Gibraltar which was steadily advancing at the Captain's orders. "You must come up on the bridge and see it. It's a fine sight."

Punctually at ten o'clock Gibraltar, obedient to Captain Curly's commands, came abeam. It was quite an occasion. Everyone on board who was English felt a proprietary interest in this sheer cliff face. Mr. Brentano came up on deck as though he personally had either designed the place or was the first

Briton to have thought of annexing it. He showed off its special points like a guide—the garrison; the battery; the harbour where lay destroyers that looked too slight and fragile to be trusted with even so much as a Channel crossing on a rough day; the rock itself.

He went on pointing out the resemblance between the chunk of stone and a great beast *couchant*, so long that soon other people who did not want to appear stupid or unobservant had to pretend that they could see it too. Even Captain Curly, who had looked at it a hundred times before, was drawn back by the magnetism of Mr. Brentano's enthusiasm.

He inspected the rugged outline critically. Nothing there that he could see. Nothing, that is, compared with a rock that he had once seen off the coast of Japan, that was Queen Victoria to the life, about a hundred times the natural size, and complete with a clump of mimosa for the back-hair. That had been a resemblance worth talking about.

"Nice lot of chaps at Gib.," Mr. Brentano remarked to Stephen. "Spent a week there once with a fellow who had been out in Singapore. No flies on him. Who says that sailors can't ride?"

"I didn't," said Stephen.

"They live for riding," Mr. Brentano continued. "Finest horses in the world. Trust a Spaniard to know a good horse. You should just see a game of polo out there. Like greased lightning. My pal got himself mixed up with a Spanish girl. Beautiful creature by all accounts. She was under fourteen at the time. English colony sided against him. He never got further than Commander. He went back to England and tried to run an antique business. It failed. I think he had two children. His wife left him. Just walked out on him. He's living at Tonbridge now. An aunt's got the kids. . . ."

While Mr. Brentano was talking to Stephen he kept an eye on the rest of the party. He was in a state of agitation and anxiety lest anyone should be left out of it. He evidently felt that the passengers were in hourly danger of disintegration, and that it was up to him to contribute something definite to the task of keeping them together. He was aggressive, cohesive, rounding up the people on deck like a sheep dog if they showed the least sign of dividing into separate and reasonably private groups. It was apparent from the start that a herd was Mr. Brentano's ideal of human society.

His excuse on this occasion was his binoculars. If he saw anyone looking at anything with the naked eye he interpreted it as a direct and deliberate slight. He would at once go genially over to the person and hand him his glasses, which were as big as a pair of beer bottles, remarking, "Have a look through these, then perhaps you'll see something." Even the Captain was compelled to relinquish his own binoculars and take a look through Mr. Brentano's when he came up. The Captain preferred his own: he had grown up with them.

The bridge soon offered too few opportunities to a man of Mr. Brentano's energy. He said good-bye and went down on to the deck again. His devotion to the interests of other people was remarkable. He was like the missionary of some proselytising religion, whose creed was heartiness.

He was occupied on the boat deck when Stephen heard Mr. Doyle's voice behind him. "You know, Gratia dear," he was saying, "I can't tell you how sorry I am we missed it. I was looking forward all the time to showing you Gibraltar. It's a very wonderful sight. And you were too young last time to remember it. I'd no idea we'd passed it."

Stephen turned his head and he saw Gratia. She smiled faintly across at him. "Have you seen Mr. Brentano?" she asked. He pointed to where he stood, his arm round some-

one's neck, showing them the distant view of that part of the Atlantic. At the same moment Mr. Brentano caught sight of her. He left the binoculars slung round his pupil's neck and came forward to meet her.

"Hello, little lady," he said. "This is a surprise. Come and have a look at things."

Gratia did not smile back. "I'm sorry, Mr. Brentano, that I spoke rudely last night," she said. "I didn't understand. I . . . I'm sorry."

Mr. Brentano stood quite still for a moment. He flushed a deeper red. Without warning he bent forward and kissed her on the forehead. She stepped back too late to avoid it. "My dear child," he said in a voice that was less than half his usual voice. "Please don't ever think of apologising to me again. There was nothing to it. Really there wasn't."

Mr. Brentano looked round for something to hide his own embarrassment. "Let's go and have a look at Gib. before it's gone altogether. Hi, you there," he called out to the man he had just left. "Stop wearing out my glasses." Putting his arm round Gratia's shoulders he walked off with her.

Stephen turned to Mr. Doyle. He was a lamentable figure, and his overcoat was buttoned aslant. He looked old and shabby. But he was happy. He was gazing after Gratia and Mr. Brentano. He was beaming. Simply beaming. Across his face played a smile of seraphic satisfaction. He took a crumpled handkerchief out of his pocket and blew his nose. Then he heaved a real sigh of relief.

THE WEATHER continued to improve. The sky, which hitherto had been grey, now became cobalt. Beneath its light the sea brightened and the crests of the wavelets as they broke showed sharply white like snow. Even the wind changed. Previously it had been harsh and bitter. Now it was soft and warm. The tang of Vladivostock in it gave place to the hot air of Tetuan. Passengers who had not appeared before or since the bump in the dark came up on deck again, blinking at the sunlight. The deck steward, with the instinct of a gardener, began setting out bright chairs in empty places. Strange sea birds that Stephen did not recognise drifted about in the high space about the *Tusitala*; and an osprey with white fanlike tail swerved and hung over the ship. Out at sea in front of them stood a fishing fleet with red sails. The gales and thunders of a hundred storms had shattered and rent the canvas, and the artist who repaired them had done his work with patches of different colours. It was a gay and symphonic little fishing fleet that remained.

From nowhere a butterfly with pointed scarlet wings, blown out of its course inland, fell limply on the deck. It was dead. But it was a butterfly. And Stephen found his mind turning in the direction of hot days and gardens and bright sun. Even Mr. Doyle came on deck in sports shoes with white canvas uppers and added his quota of exotic gaiety to the scene. He came and joined Stephen with a jaunty cocksure air. He was using a long amber holder and his cigarette stuck out on a level with his left eye. A coloured handkerchief, stuck in

his breast pocket, combined with the shoes to give him a rakish devil-may-care expression. He looked like a man, if not with a future in life, at least with a tolerably satisfying present. "Is this the first time you've been through the Straits?" he enquired, with a note of condescension in his voice.

Stephen told him it was.

"Very natural to be excited about it I'm sure," Mr. Doyle went on. "Doesn't Dr. Johnson say something about the ambition of every traveller being to visit the Mediterranean."

"He does," Stephen replied. "He says that the grand object of all travel is to see the shores of the Mediterranean."

"Quite so, just as I thought," said Mr. Doyle. "I don't read Johnson myself. Not the time. I read his words as a quotation in an old Baedeker. They stuck. You see the Mediterranean means a lot to me."

Mr. Doyle sat down in a deck chair and indicated another for Stephen. "I was a young man like yourself when I first came East. I had plans in my head. I had ambitions. I had the right letters of introduction. I meant to . . ." Mr. Doyle paused for a second that slowly became a minute. . . . "But what's the use of thinking about it? None of it's happened. It's nearly over now."

Mr. Doyle lapsed into silence. The cigarette in his amber holder went out. With the toe of one shoe he meditatively rubbed a place where on account of a large bunion he had made a little gash in the tight canvas of the shoe. Already the cloth on either side of the opening was fraying and gaping. When he spoke again the jauntiness had left him. It was the other Mr. Doyle who spoke.

"I know this must sound a strange thing to ask," he began in a low hesitating voice that made Stephen think that he was

going to try and borrow money, "and I wouldn't do it, if there weren't a lot depending upon it. Really I wouldn't." He lapsed into silence.

"What is it?" Stephen asked.

"It's just this," said Mr. Doyle apologetically. "I want to know what you think of Mr. Brentano. That's all. That's all it is."

At the unexpectedness of the question Stephen laughed. "He's all right," he said, and seeing that more seemed to be expected, he added, "He seems a damn good fellow."

"You really think so," exclaimed Mr. Doyle excitedly, rubbing his hands with delight. "A damn good fellow. That's capital. Oh, I can't tell you what that means to me. It makes all the difference."

"All what difference?" Stephen asked.

"It's all very difficult to explain," he said coyly. "I can't go into that now. But believe me, it isn't just myself I'm thinking of." In some mysterious way Mr. Doyle had recovered his gaiety and self-confidence. He took out a match. Tried absent-mindedly to light it on the rubber soles of his shoes, and finally lit his cigarette at Stephen's lighter. Then he breathed out the smoke through his nose grandly and superciliously. By the time Mr. Brentano himself came upon the deck, wearing a canary-coloured pullover, no one could have guessed that Mr. Doyle had just emerged from one of his customary fits of depression.

Mr. Brentano despite the courage of his clothes did not look cheerful. He had the air of a man with something on his mind. The lines on his face were deep, like those of someone who had not slept. In the clear morning light he looked heavy and gross.

"Morning all," he said and sat down beside them. "Ugh, I feel liverish."

"It's nothing," Mr. Doyle assured him. "Probably it's just the change in the air. It affects some people that way."

Mr. Brentano turned on him. "Who the hell do you think you're talking to?" he asked. "Anyone to hear you would think I was some bloody little clerk on a week-end cruise."

"You're right," said Mr. Doyle, trying to imitate one of Mr. Brentano's winks. "You certainly are liverish."

"Well," said Mr. Brentano. "So would you be if your liver wasn't in holes like a sieve. It was after three when I turned in last night."

"I'm afraid I kept you," Mr. Doyle replied anxiously. "But everything's fixed up all right, isn't it?"

Stephen caught a glimpse of Mr. Doyle. The look of easy self-confidence had disappeared. His face had contracted into a hard mask of anxiety. He kept opening his mouth to say something and then thinking better of it. Stephen got up to leave them.

"Don't go," Mr. Brentano called out. "No secrets between friends."

Stephen excused himself, however. Mr. Brentano had clearly suggested that he should stop merely because he enjoyed tormenting Mr. Doyle. Stephen put Mr. Doyle out of his misery. He assured them that he was merely waiting for an excuse to take some exercise. He left them sitting there like two friends about to have a chat.

Mr. Brentano waved cheerfully after him. Mr. Doyle was twittering with agitation. By the time Stephen passed them on his first round they were deep in conversation. Mr. Brentano was so engrossed that he even forgot to call something after him. They were talking as men will talk on business; as though the universe could end and leave them unaffected. Mr. Brentano was sitting back in his chair and Mr. Doyle was leaning so far forward and his mouth was so wide open that

he looked as though he were hoping that Mr. Brentano would pop a sweet into it. The look of alarm in his eyes had grown into obvious terror. His eyes bulged.

When Stephen sat down again he chose the chair farthest from them. But it was not far enough. They were still talking. Stray phrases came drifting across to him as clearly as if he had been eavesdropping.

"Call that security?" Mr. Brentano said, and there was the sound of a contemptuous laugh. "It's a mere flea-bite." There was a silence after that, disturbed only by the low mutter of voices. It was Mr. Doyle who was next audible. "It's only if she's willing," he said. "That's flat."

"You'll see if she's willing or not," Mr. Brentano replied.

There was a scraping of chairs and Stephen knew that they had got up. They came past him without pausing. As they went by he heard Mr. Brentano say, "Now which of us shall tell the little lady? You or me?"

The ship's siren announcing midday obliterated Mr. Doyle's reply.

IN FRONT of the ship, a school of porpoises, like clockwork toys in which the mechanism had gone fantastically and unaccountably wrong, turned over and over in the water.

Dr. Jarvis was standing watching them. He did not feel very well. He had just extracted a tooth, a woman's tooth. It was too much like surgery before Lord Lister's day. It was primitive, barbaric. The kind of case he preferred was one in which he visited the patient, prescribed a medicine, and

returned the next day to see what time and the amazing recuperative powers of the human body had been able to do in the way of a cure. Dentistry on the other hand was a matter of instant decision and action. Neither on this occasion had been so instantaneous as they should have been. Dr. Jarvis, when the case first came to him, had administered aspirin generously and hopefully. And then, when he had come to the conclusion that an extraction was inevitable, he had failed to achieve that flick of the wrist that dental text-books so artfully describe. The operation had been protracted and sanguinary. The patient was now back in the Third Class recovering. Dr. Jarvis was trying to cover up the memory of the affair by watching the porpoises. He was evidently in need of a companion, and when he saw Stephen looking in his direction he took the opportunity of joining him. "A beautiful day, is it not?" he observed as he came over. Stephen agreed with him that it was, and said something about the good sense of taking advantage of it.

"Ah, my dear sir!" Dr. Jarvis replied with deep seriousness. "I'm afraid I don't get much time for sitting about in deck chairs. There's always something on hand. I've just had an operation." He paused. A picturesque fantasy flitted across his mind. "If it had been really serious I should have had the ship stopped," he added.

"Did everything go off all right?" Stephen asked, with the natural veneration of the layman for the healer.

Dr. Jarvis spread his hands deprecatingly. "So, so," he said. "That is unless any complications set in."

While he was speaking the patient, still shaky and with her face already visibly swelling, was painfully drinking tea in the Third Class lounge and describing to an admiring group the tussle that she and Dr. Jarvis had had together. "Something chronic it was; he didn't ought to be allowed to pull a

nail out of a horse-shoe. I thought me jaw was breaking . . .”

“It’s always a tricky business doing anything at sea. By the way”—here Dr. Jarvis broke off suddenly—“you know Miss Doyle, don’t you?”

“Yes,” said Stephen slowly. “I know her. Why?”

“Well,” the doctor explained, “perhaps it’s not quite the thing to discuss one’s patients, but I thought you might be able to help me. After all, my job is to cure my patients, and I was wondering whether you could tell me if the young lady had suffered any shock recently.”

“She was taken away from school unexpectedly, I believe,” said Stephen.

“It could hardly be that alone,” mused Dr. Jarvis. “It might be something connected with it. If it’s bad news it must have come by wireless. I’ll ask the operator. If it had been anything on board, the Captain would have told me. He has a wonderful nose for gossip, our Captain has. But whatever it is, that girl has had a shock, a nasty shock. The father called me in to her. She was in that state that comes immediately on top of a shock. I recognised it at once. Very quiet and compressed, absolutely silent in fact. Unusually highly strung disposition. She was trembling all over, just like an electric vibrator, when I touched her. She’ll be all to pieces in twelve hours. Very devoted man, Mr. Doyle. Looks after her like a mother.”

“Can she see visitors?” asked Stephen suddenly.

The doctor regarded him quizzically. “I’ll ask her,” he said. “You may rely on me. I must hurry off now. It’s a funny thing, you know,” he added, momentarily forgetting the urgency of the occasion; “the Company provides free medical attention for anything that breaks out on the voyage. You’d scarcely believe what does break out—appendixes that have never so much as murmured before suddenly burst,

women find themselves nine months gone with child without having even suspected it, people develop tuberculosis the first day at sea. It's enough to make you doubt human nature. I must be off now. I won't forget," he said meaningly over his shoulder.

But Gratia was not seeing any visitors. Dr. Jarvis explained that until the shock, whatever it was, had worn off, it was far better that she should be left alone. Mr. Brentano and her father seemed to have taken an oath as well not to share the company of the rest of the ship. They forgathered in odd corners of the saloon, each with a dispatch case, and littered the table in front of them with papers and glasses. A stranger might have interpreted the scene as one in which a confidence trick was in actual progress of being played. But it would have been hard to say with certainty which was the trickster. Mr. Brentano was having the better time of it, but Mr. Doyle was as plainly eager for him to go on.

They stayed away from dinner together.

The table was just an expanse of empty places. Even the Captain was absent when Stephen arrived. Ever since the collision Captain Curly had been a man with a cloud over his soul. It was a cloud that the thought of the owners in the offices of the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Company in Fenchurch Street, ignorantly judging the case, did nothing to dispel.

The sight of Stephen obviously worried and depressed did something to cheer him, however. If Stephen were depressed there must have been something to depress him. Seriously and methodically the Captain resumed his task of probing when he came down.

"Miss Doyle not ill again?" he asked.

"She's not very well," Stephen explained.

"Ah, too bad," the Captain ejaculated with fussy, pro-

fessional concern. "And no sea running to speak of. She'll have to find her sea legs, before we get to the Gulf. It can be very nasty in the Indian Ocean. I'm afraid Miss Doyle's not very strong."

Stephen nodded. "Apparently not," he said.

"That's why I'm so glad that Mr. Brentano's a member of the party," Captain Curly remarked.

"Why?" Stephen asked.

"He's such a nice capable sort of man," the Captain continued. "That girl's father is a charming fellow, perfectly delightful, but he's careless. When he came on board he left everything to Mr. Brentano; absolutely everything. I really thought that Miss Doyle and Mr. Brentano were husband and wife."

"Why, he's old enough to be her father," Stephen blurted out.

"Do you really think so?" asked the Captain. The idea seemed to be novel to him. "And how old would you say he was?"

"Forty if he's a day," replied Stephen briefly.

"I wonder," continued the Captain musingly. "I shouldn't have put him so old as that. I should have said about thirty-eight. He is unmarried, I believe. You are unmarried yourself you say."

Stephen nodded.

"It's a comfortable state," the Captain continued. "The trouble is that it doesn't last. When you're married you know where you are. You can meet women without feeling all the time that they are expecting you to make love to them. Before I got married I was afraid to be left in the room with a school-girl. Afterwards I took the entire touring company of *The Merry Widow* all the way to South Africa and never turned a hair. The real trouble is that women hate a bachelor. He

destroys their theory that a man can't live without a woman. They set on a bachelor like a pack of wolves."

"I think they know I'm hopeless," said Stephen lightly.

"I wonder." The Captain spoke reflectively. "Take our friend, Brentano, for instance. He's probably been saying for years that he wasn't the marrying sort. But someone will get him sooner or later. For all we know it may be Miss Doyle."

"I shouldn't think that was very likely," said Stephen quickly.

"Why not?" the Captain asked. "She's a very attractive girl. She'd make a good wife, or she'd tell him that she meant to do so, which is about all most of us ever get. The sea is a wonderful tonic you know. Braces up the whole system. Everyone falls in love. Even the elderly ones. Like old times it is. A young girl like that is sure to fall in love. Mr. Brentano's the only man."

"Why?"

"Because, my dear sir," the Captain explained, very charmingly and politely, "you are the only other eligible man on board, and you say you are not the marrying sort. Are you coming up to join us at a little bridge? I shall be along presently."

Stephen found Mr. Brentano and Mr. Doyle sitting on a couch in the saloon. Mr. Doyle looked vague and uncertain. His body when he got up to greet Stephen gave sudden sways and lurches, unaccounted for by the motion of the boat. Mr. Brentano on the other hand looked well established and self-possessed. He was sitting as all fat men sit, with his legs wide apart. His square purplish face melted into his double chin which occupied the whole width of his collar. He was as solid and massive and aggressively English as the Rock itself.

"Come, sit here," invited Mr. Doyle, sprawling forward as though he had been pushed.

"What the hell do you want to keep springing up for?" asked Mr. Brentano, whose glass had nearly been upset. "Can't you sit still? Come over here, MacFadyen. We need someone to keep our friend in order."

"What will you have?" asked Mr. Doyle. "What about a champagne cocktail?" His speech was in that state which resembles a lawn with worm-casts over which a heavy roller has been passed. It was flattened and levelled and blurred.

"I've just had dinner, thanks," said Stephen.

"We're just going to have ours. Aren't we, Brentano?" Mr. Doyle put an affectionate arm across his friend's shoulders. "We're celebrating. We've been drinking champagne cocktails, lots of 'em, and sherry."

"What have you been celebrating?" Stephen asked.

"Tell him what it is," said Mr. Brentano.

"Oh, I couldn't," replied Mr. Doyle. "Really I couldn't. Just think of her feelings. Girls are very sensitive creatures. She wouldn't like it. She might never forgive us. Don't forget we haven't really asked her yet. I just explained to her how things were. You said yourself we would wait till her birthday."

"Have it your own way then," said Mr. Brentano.

Mr. Doyle was confused and at a loss for words. He fumbled nervously at his collar. Suddenly the spring top of the stud snapped open and the collar gaped. "I don't see why I shouldn't tell you," he said to Stephen. "After all, we're all friends here. But it's a secret." He dropped his voice and looked round for possible eavesdroppers. "Gratia's going to marry Brentano," he said in a hoarse whisper. There were tears in his eyes as he spoke.

Neither Mr. Brentano nor Stephen said a word. Stephen looked at Mr. Doyle; a tear ran crookedly down his cheek and plopped on to the corner of his collar. Then another and an-

other. Mr. Doyle was openly and unashamedly crying. He searched for a handkerchief, found that he was without one, and used his sleeve. Even his forehead was smeary and wet when he had finished.

The silence persisted. At last Mr. Brentano spoke. "It's usual, I believe," he said to Stephen in a harsh biting voice, "to offer congratulations on these occasions."

IN CABIN TWENTY-SEVEN Mr. Doyle and Gratia were sitting together. Mr. Doyle was up beside Gratia on the bunk. His legs were shorter than hers. They swung in and out, like those of a child on a high stool. As he talked he kept bending over and dabbing little kisses on the side of Gratia's face. She had been crying.

"Don't you see, darling," Mr. Doyle was saying, "it's you I'm thinking of all the time? You're young, you're beautiful, beautiful as your mother was. You ought to have a good time. But you can't, unless you've got plenty of money. You need money for every blooming thing that's worth having. Your poor old Dad can tell you that all right. He's known what it means to have to go without. Besides, darling, there isn't a straighter man anywhere than Brentano. He's a white man. That's what he is, proper white man. He's worth something, too, let me tell you that. He's got property everywhere out East. Little bits of it, wedged in here and fitted in here"—he gave feeble little lunges with his forefinger to indicate the extent of Mr. Brentano's penetration as a land speculator—"you wouldn't believe it. He knows what he's up to, does Brentano."

He's as safe as a rock. He's a husband most girls would jump at, absolutely jump at."

"But I tell you I don't want to marry anyone." Gratia's voice was hard and angry.

"Sweetest little Gratia." Mr. Doyle took her face in his two hands and kissed her. "You don't understand. You don't know how things are with me. Really you don't. Do you realise that until last night all the ready money I had in the world was seven pounds odd. Not even enough to pay the tips on this boat, do you realise? And now look at this." Mr. Doyle held out a wallet stuffed fat with notes for her to see. "One hundred pounds there," he said, stroking it lovingly. "I cashed the cheque with the purser. It was a Cook's cheque, so he couldn't say it wasn't good. One hundred pounds, and more where it came from. What do you say to that?"

"Where did you get it?" asked Gratia anxiously.

"That's my affair, dear," Mr. Doyle replied. "Anyhow, I got it didn't I? You can have this back now." He extracted four pound notes from the rest and handed them to her. She ignored them.

"You've been sponging on Mr. Brentano?" she said.

Mr. Doyle put the notes away again. It was evident that he was offended. "Darling," he said, in a tone of soothing rebuke, "you still don't understand. You're too young to know what it's like for a grown man to have no money, not a bean in the world. You don't understand the meaning of responsibility. Why should you? You're not twenty yet. You've been looked after all the time. I've done everything I could to shield you. And now there's nothing left between my own daughter and . . ." Mr. Doyle threw up his arms in a gesture calculated to convey despair, desolation, penury and the whole octave of human misery.

"So you cadged all that money from Mr. Brentano?"

Mr. Doyle slid off the bunk and began to pace backwards and forwards across the empty cabin. "How can you say such things?" he asked. "You know how much I love you. Your own mother used to complain that I made myself a laughing-stock the way I carried you about with me everywhere I went when you were a baby. And now because . . . because my luck's changed, you turn on me this way."

"Well, why did he give it to you, anyhow?"

"The hotel, Gratia darling, the hotel. It's a security—a cast-iron security. The hotel is a gold-mine. Coins money while you sleep. Pay off the mortgage, put in electric light, have the staircase repaired, get a decent refrigerator installed, and you needn't do another day's work in your life. Just sit back and watch it paying dividends."

"Then why haven't we got any money now?" Gratia asked.

Mr. Doyle collapsed on to the wicker chair that stood in the corner. The chair was old and forlorn-looking. It drooped and sagged like its occupant. "I suppose you've got to know some time," he said, "so you might as well know now. Everything I've put my hand to has failed. Every bloody thing. I got an agency for a London firm but they went broke. I tried to start a garage alongside of the hotel but the petrol pump blew up. I got a man in to manage the hotel while I looked about a bit, and he stole the billiard-table. The whole blasted billiard-table gone, mind you, as clean as if he'd swallowed it. I've been a sort of Jonah. I can't raise any more money on the hotel, not a copper. I've been keeping going on loans while you've been living at the Convent and wearing pretty dresses and taking music lessons and going to dances. That hotel isn't mine any more. Every door-knob and table in the place is Bren-tano's just as much as if he'd paid money over the counter for them. And do I grudge what I've done for you? Of course I don't, because all I want is for you to be happy."

"But how could I be happy married to Mr. Brentano?"

"All right then," said Mr. Doyle, "say no more about it. I'm not a man to force your hand, thank God! I'm not thinking of myself. I'm so old that I don't count anyhow. I'll work my fingers to the bone to support you. If I can find a job, that is. There aren't a lot of jobs going and they prefer younger men. But if you say so, I'll try. I'm not done for yet. And it did seem all so simple too." Mr. Doyle gave a little sigh. "Brentano said that he'd come to the conclusion that he was a marrying man after all. And I knew well enough the way he was looking. But it's off now so far as I'm concerned if you say so."

Mr. Doyle got up slowly and walked to the cabin door. As he went past, Gratia caught his arm. She swung him right round. "You've got to give me time to think," she said. "I've got to be left alone."

She flung herself on the bunk. Long dry sobs began to go through her again. As Mr. Doyle couldn't bear to see a woman crying, he tiptoed out of the cabin and went up into the saloon.

WHAT IF SHE IS going to marry Brentano?" Stephen asked himself for the hundredth time. "It's not my affair. It's hers and Brentano's. I hardly know the girl. She's not my sort at all. Quite different really. She's no more than a school-girl. Simply a temperamental school-girl. That's what she is. Probably it will never happen in any case. Brentano will back out at the last moment. He'll see what an ass he's making of

himself. Or Doyle won't allow it. Damn it, she's his daughter, not mine. She'll refuse. That's what she'll do. She'll refuse point-blank when it comes to the point."

But the more he told himself that it could not happen, the more certainly he knew it could. It was the very measure of this world's imperfection that it should be so. And it was complicated by another factor. A week ago, so far as he was concerned, Gratia had simply not existed. Now she existed all the time in the forefront of his mind. A week ago he would not have cared whom she married. Now he cared extraordinarily about everything that concerned her. He must find a way to help her. There was no question about that. He could not stand by, doing nothing. Somehow or other he must devise a scheme to save her from being offered up, a shrinking and reluctant sacrifice, upon the altar of Mr. Brentano's heartiness. He told himself sharply not to be a fool, a damn fool.

He wanted to think things out quietly. He must do nothing rash, nothing headstrong. It was an occasion for cool common sense to rise superior to the affairs of the moment. He turned up the collar of his jacket and went up on the boat deck. It was early evening, a pale transparent evening, delicate as a sunrise. The air itself seemed to glow, golden and faintly luminous. The sea was placid and undisturbed. Behind the *Tusitala* lay a thick coil of smoke. It extended nearly to the horizon, a thick dark Welsh-smokeless smudge. Stephen watched it with unfocused eyes. His mind was on other things. He filled his pipe with the slow precision of a man who is thinking about something else. He did it carefully, as though more than smoking depended upon it. Then with his hands clasped behind his back he walked slowly up and down in the narrow space that was left between the ship's motor life-boat and the chest that grimly contained belts and cork rafts. He was oblivious to his surroundings; aloof and preoccupied.

As he reviewed the situation, he felt how fortunate it was that he was not the sort of man likely to fall in love with Gratia. He was fond of her, yes. He admitted the fact. That she was still really nothing more than a stranger had nothing to do with it. And she was good-looking. Decidedly so. Superbly good-looking with those deep-set dark eyes and that heavy coil of hair, as blue black as an Italian's. An impressionable man might easily have fallen for a girl who was not the shadow of Gratia. At the thought of marriage to Gratia, Stephen smiled. He wondered what they would say at the English College if he arrived there with a wife like Gratia and a man like Doyle for a father-in-law. He shuddered at the latter thought.

At the end of half an hour he was still up there alone. The glow in the air had faded, leaving the deeper colours of night behind. Across the horizon and rising from it a cloud of indigo blackness stretched up towards the heavens. The cloud seemed to cast a shadow of cold as well as of darkness. Stephen shuddered and went below to the smoking-room. Mr. Brentano had got there before him.

There was a whisky and soda on the bar in front of him. He was reading a copy of *La Vie Parisienne*. His eyes were nearly popping out of his head with excitement. The best jokes he shared with the steward, Charley. Charley knew them all. He had carried that feast of silk garters and tempting *poitrines* backwards and forwards between London and Penang half a dozen times. But under the influence of Mr. Brentano's enthusiasm he now found qualities and points that had escaped him.

When Mr. Brentano saw Stephen he handed Charley back the magazine with a wink. The wink said mutely but unmistakably that though good fellows like Charley and Mr. Brentano appreciated the fundamental and eternal comedy

of the sexes, others like Stephen MacFadyen might not. Charley put the paper away and asked Stephen what he would have.

It was ominous that Mr. Brentano did not. He merely acknowledged Stephen with a nod and waited until he had begun his drink. Then he turned abruptly and said. "You didn't seem very pleased over the bit of news you heard last night."

"I was surprised," Stephen replied.

"And why?" Mr. Brentano asked.

"I didn't know whether Mr. Doyle was in a mood to be taken seriously," Stephen explained. "He was rather . . ."

"Canned," Mr. Brentano supplied the word. "I should say he was. You should have seen him at dinner. He was well away. Thought the fairies had got him. Little men and all that sort of stuff. First step to D.T.s. Poor old Doyle's a sad case. He can't believe his head's gone. I remember when Doyle could do a trick with a bottle of whisky that would make a conjurer look silly. Now he passes out on half a glass. How many have I had, Charley?"

Charley was evidently something of a mathematician. "If you have another it'll be six," he said.

"Singles or doubles?"

"Three doubles, two singles and the white lady I sent up to your cabin."

"Then give me another double," he said, and turning to Stephen added, "that boy's a marvel. He's got me down to a bottle a day."

Mr. Brentano fixed himself more firmly on the top of his stool. It was surprising that so large a man could sit on so small a chair. He bulged all over it. No portion of the seat was visible. His feet in their tight yellow brogues were set far apart on the rail of the bar to give solidity to the mass. His legs in

their check trousers were like flying buttresses. Other people on board merely looked what they were—stray intruders, mere temporary residents. But Mr. Brentano might have been on board all his life. He was completely at home. He looked as huge and immovable as a stone Buddha in a Chinese rock temple. He finished his drink, pouring it straight down inside him as though he was filling a glass from a jug. He made no suggestion about having another but turned to Stephen and said, "Look here, you and me have got to have a talk. Come along and find somewhere quiet."

The place they found was a corner of the saloon. Mr. Brentano selected one chair and pulled another up so close to it that Stephen's face would almost have been touching. Stephen pushed it back a little and sat down. Mr. Brentano was not a man of hesitating temperament. "Let's get down to brass tacks," he said. He was always trying to get down to brass tacks. They were his intellectual approach to everything. "How much stuff has old Doyle been spilling?" he asked. "What have you heard?"

"I've heard," Stephen replied, "that you're going to marry Miss Doyle."

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"It's none of my business to think anything," Stephen answered.

Mr. Brentano was evidently in considerable agitation. "But you must think something about it," he blurted out.

Stephen made no reply.

Mr. Brentano wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. Then he passed his finger round the inside of his collar. He was sweating. "Look here," he said abruptly, "I suppose you think this is just a flash-in-the-pan affair. Well it isn't, see! I've had my eye on that girl for over five years. Saw her photograph out in Singapore when I first met her father. He

used to carry it about with him. In her confirmation frock she was, all white and fresh-looking. I said to myself then, 'That's the girl for a man who knows what's what.' I made up my mind then. I got Doyle to send for a second copy. I've carried it about with me ever since. Like to see it? "

Mr. Brentano brought out his pocket-book. It was a heavy crocodile-skin case with gilt edges. It looked as fat and prosperous as Mr. Brentano himself. "That's it," he said, and pulled out a small, rubbed photograph. The photograph had been taken six years before. Gratia was a child then. It was a small, serious face that stared back at Stephen. Even in those days the eyes were sad and unsmiling.

The picture was clearly the product of an orthodox imagination. In her hand rested a little white prayer book from which hung the beads and crucifix of a rosary. A vase of lilies, no doubt the photographer's own property, stood out against a suitably painted background of Gothic windows and steps that hinted meaningly at an altar. Everything had been arranged; even Gratia's feet in their white kid shoes. These faced outwards at the correct angle of forty-five degrees.

The Presbyterian blood of his ancestors surged through Stephen's veins. "Fancy confirming children at that age," he thought bitterly.

He thanked Mr. Brentano and handed back the photograph.

Mr. Brentano took it and regarded it affectionately for a moment.

"Now that's what I call a face," he said. "Something to look at there. Two lovely black eyes, what? Wonderful child she was. Just like something out of a book. I reckon she's about the best piece of work old Doyle ever did. She's the goods." Mr. Brentano had a mind ill equipped to cope with life's lyrical moments. But his enthusiasm was beyond question.

"And mind you I know what I'm talking about," he went on, warming up to his subject. "I've had plenty of them in my time. All sorts too. Blonde, brunette, ginger—every kind you can think of. And I haven't seen a bloody one of 'em that was fit to hold a candle to her. When I was young I had the best of the bunch to myself. And I tell you Gratia leaves them all standing."

"Does Doyle know about the others?" asked Stephen pointedly.

"If Gratia married me," replied Mr. Brentano, "he'd be the happiest man in the world. Daughter provided for. No more worry about where the next year's Christmas dinner is coming from. Nothing to do but sit in the shade and get tight. Doyle knows which side his bread's buttered all right."

"Wouldn't he miss Gratia a lot if she left him?" Stephen suggested.

From the expression on Mr. Brentano's face he gathered the answer was "No."

"He's got plenty of people to take good care of him," said Mr. Brentano contemptuously. "He's found his comfort where he sought it all right. And pretty low some of them are, too."

"Some of what?" Stephen asked.

"Some of his comforts, his little household comforts," explained Mr. Brentano with a knowledgeable wink. "Poor old Doyle has to have someone. That's his trouble. He's sort of the reverse of a bachelor as you might say. Just can't manage alone. I tell you Doyle could set eyes on a woman in a fog. That's partly why Mrs. Doyle went under. Simply couldn't stand it. After she went he had one or two pretty decent ones. But the decent ones wouldn't stay with Doyle. So he had to put up with the other sort. You should see the present lady of

the manor." Brentano raised his eyebrows and said "Phew."

Stephen was silent. "Does Gratia know?" he asked.

"No, of course she doesn't. Do you think old Doyle would tell her things like that? And if he doesn't, who would? I couldn't go up to her and say 'Your old Dad's been on the tiles for the last quarter of a century,' could I?"

"Won't it all come as a bit of a shock?"

"Not if I have my way, it won't!" said Mr. Brentano. "I don't want Gratia to get within a hundred miles of it. Let her go on believing all the best about the old man. Bless her heart, what harm can it do? All I want is to clear things up out East and come back home to settle down somewhere. You know the sort of thing: keep bees and do a bit of gardening. That's the life for a married man. No decent man would want to keep a woman out East. You wait till you've seen a few, then you'll know why."

"Everything's fixed up, then?" Stephen asked. "You're definitely going to marry her?"

"Of course I am," said Mr. Brentano. "A man who would go back on Gratia just because of her father doesn't deserve to get a wife. I'm going through with it all right."

"And does Miss Doyle fall in with the plan?" Stephen asked.

"That's the whole point," said Mr. Brentano, with the air of a man with a grievance. "She's all on edge. Can't bring herself to face things. Knocked sideways so to speak. Of course"—here Mr. Brentano stuck his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat and gave a little gesture calculated to convey an impression of embarrassed modesty—"it may be that I'm rather more than she bargained for. She probably expected some tupenny-ha'penny whippersnapper of a clerk with two-fifty a year and the smell of a pension at the end of it. I can do a bit better than that for her, thank God! But she won't see

me. Just shuts herself up in her cabin and won't see a soul. I've been down there myself. Not so much as a whisper! Mind you I admire the girl. Nerve: that's what she's got. I've noticed it in a lot of little ways that if you come against Gratia you come against a brick wall. Her father knows it too. That's why he tries to get round her the way he does. He's down there now. But he'll probably make a mess of it."

"What'll you do if she keeps it up?" Stephen asked.

"She won't," said Mr. Brentano with conviction. "I know women. There's some devil inside them makes 'em behave that way at first. You see a woman chase a man until she's run him to earth and then when he proposes she smacks his face. It's just their way. I know how things will turn out."

"You do?" said Stephen. He wondered if Mr. Brentano were right.

"Yes," said Mr. Brentano briefly. "I do."

He smiled. It was a broad significant smile, the kind of smile that might have crossed the face of a Roman Emperor when he saw the Christians waiting there in the sunlight in the sand below and knew that they could hear the lions roaring in the Imperial cages. It was not a cruel smile so much as a smile that showed that its wearer was acquainted with both sides of life, the comic and tragic, and could appreciate the entertainment when they overlapped.

"Come along and find her father," he said at length. "He ought to be back by now. We know his address; that's something."

Mr. Brentano was right. There, sitting up at the bar, was Mr. Doyle. His pocket-book still opulently bulging with notes lay on the counter before him. But he was not drinking. He was staring straight in front of him. His sparse white hair was ruffled as though he had been running his fingers through it. He was still wearing the little tussock silk jacket which was

evidently his favourite costume. Hunched up on the top of his stool he looked like a seagull on a post. He had the hopeless downcast look of a man who has tried and failed and has finally decided to give up trying altogether.

"SO THAT WAS THE BEST you could do, was it?" asked Mr. Brentano pityingly when Stephen had left them.

Mr. Doyle found that a question had been addressed to him. He jerked himself into attention and nodded.

"Well, it isn't good enough, see?" Mr. Brentano dug at him with his thumb to rouse him and emphasise the point.

"But I did everything I could, Brentano," grumbled Mr. Doyle. "Really I did. She's got a headache."

"You said just now that she felt sick," Mr. Brentano interrupted pointedly.

"Yes, that's right," Mr. Doyle explained hurriedly. "She does. It's a sick-headache she's got. She just wants to be left alone. She says that if only you'll give her another day or two to think about things she'll . . ."

"She'll what?"

"She'll be ready to talk things over," Mr. Doyle paused. "I think she's in favour of a long engagement," he added. "She said something of the kind. But that doesn't matter, does it? The important thing is to get everything settled, isn't it?" Mr. Doyle took a sideways look at Mr. Brentano. He found no consolation there. There was another pause, an awkward ominous pause. Then the pale face of Mr. Doyle lit up with the light of inspiration. "She sent you her love," he said consolingly.

Mr. Brentano spat smartly and accurately into the sand-filled cuspidor, with the initials of the Line upon it, that stood on the floor of the smoking-room. He took no notice of the last remark and Mr. Doyle repeated it hopefully.

Mr. Brentano magnificently ignored it. "Tell Gratia," he said with the air of a man drawing up a business contract, "that I've always known my mind and I like other people to know theirs. Tell her some of the things I've done for her. Put it naturally, as though it comes from you. But put all the cards on the table for her to see. She's an intelligent girl and she can add things up for herself. Tell her that I can make her comfortable. Yes, that's it. Rub it in. Every little luxury she could want. Tell her that. Say I want my wife to have the best of everything. Take up that line with her."

"I've already taken up every line you can think of. I haven't left a stone unturned. I explained that it was her I was thinking about the whole time, just like you said. But it was no use."

"You didn't bring yourself in at all."

Mr. Doyle seemed embarrassed. He shifted awkwardly in his chair. "Well," he said, "I did just mention how I came into it. But I told her not to take me into account. I told her I was too old to think about, anyhow. I told her that I'd spent all my life working for her and that I was prepared to go on working if I had to. I told her to think only of herself."

"What did she say to that?" asked Mr. Brentano with quickened interest. It was obvious from the way he spoke that he appreciated Mr. Doyle's masterly handling of the situation.

Mr. Doyle looked embarrassed again. "She said that she *was* thinking of herself. She said it wasn't me who had to marry you."

"What?" Mr. Brentano kicked Mr. Doyle's foot with the toe of his shoe in his exasperation.

"She . . . she was very difficult, remember." Mr. Doyle faltered.

"But you said just now that she sent her love."

"So she did. So she did." Mr. Doyle passed his hand across his forehead. "She spoke very affectionately of you throughout."

"Now look here, Doyle," said Mr. Brentano dropping his voice. "We've got to get this straight. Just think for a moment. Do you realise how much you've had off me?"

The occasion that Mr. Doyle had been dreading had arrived. He caught his breath in dismay. "Oh, I know. You've been very, very generous. Nothing I can do will ever repay it."

Mr. Brentano checked him. "Oh yes, it will," he said slowly. "What about that little hotel of yours on the water front. I don't say that it would repay everything. But it would repay something. You know you've been having a pretty good time lately. You've been using me just like a bank. This little jaunt of ours has cost a nice little bit. And what do I get out of it?"

"I know, I know," said Mr. Doyle miserably, adding for want of something to say, "I know."

"Well what are you going to do about it?" asked Mr. Brentano in a voice that struck on Mr. Doyle's ears with a note of callous cheerfulness. "Have you got something I don't know about up your sleeve?"

"No, really I haven't. I haven't a bean. Not a bean."

"Oh, come on," said Mr. Brentano, "you can't expect me to believe that. You know perfectly well when you first asked for a little loan on top of the mortgage you said you'd got plenty to cover it. Well, where is it? Let's have a look at it."

"It's the hotel," Mr. Doyle gasped. "That's all I've got."

He was wriggling in his chair like a very small fish that has got itself hooked.

"All right then," said Mr. Brentano. "I suppose I'll have to be content with that. You'll have to make other arrangements, I'm afraid."

"But if you've got the hotel where shall we go? It's the only home Gratia's got." He looked about him desperately as though wondering whether to go down on his knees before Mr. Brentano.

"She could stay on for a bit if she wanted to," said Mr. Brentano in an off-hand manner. "I don't want to be hard on her. Besides a woman takes up less room than a man. Mind you, if the job you keep talking about turns out to be a winner you might like to come back to the hotel and live there quietly as a visitor. After all we're old friends. I'd come to some arrangement about terms. I'm not the sort of man to drive a hard bargain."

For a moment in his despair, Mr. Doyle showed fight. "Look here, Brentano," he began, "you can't talk to me like this. We've been pals for nearly ten years."

Mr. Brentano took a deep breath and set his cigar down on the arm of his chair. He turned on Mr. Doyle. "You'd look very pretty in the dock for trying to get money under false pretences wouldn't you?" he asked. "And that's what it amounts to, don't forget. Plenty of men have gone inside for less. And what do I do about it? Nothing, absolutely nothing. That is so long as I'm treated decent. Otherwise . . ." He pulled the corners of his mouth down and shrugged his shoulders so expressively that Mr. Doyle saw an endless vista of stone courtyards and prison grey opening before him. "If you keep your head, Gratia need never know about it."

Mr. Doyle's face was quite white except for two little spots of colour that burned brightly on his cheek-bones. He looked

like a man who has just received a blow that has winded him.

He was quite unprepared for it when Mr. Brentano put his hand on his shoulder and said: "Let's go along and get some dinner. Nothing like talking for giving you an appetite."

Mr. Doyle struggled dutifully to his feet.

IT WAS a wretched and weary Mr. Doyle who threw open the deck door of the *Tusilala* and surveyed the bright unfading blue of the Mediterranean. He did not feel very well. Had he been on land he would have been content to call it biliousness. Here on a 13,000-ton vessel he did not know whether it was the ship or his stomach. He feared it must be the latter.

He had not slept. At four o'clock in the morning when he had looked at his watch, he had begun to wonder if he would ever get to sleep again. And so far as he could remember he had never tried harder to fall asleep. Simply fall asleep and forget things. But the harder he tried, the more clearly wide awake and anxious he became. The only consolation he could think of was that Mr. Brentano did not really mean all that he had said or that Gratia would in the end fall in with the general scheme. But he knew Mr. Brentano and he remembered Gratia's mother.

Now that he had come on deck he wished that he had stayed below. Usually he remained on his back in his bunk, smoking innumerable cigarettes until the steward came into the cabin and began to talk about lunch and ask whether he would like to have it brought down to him. But this morning his cabin had seemed unpleasantly suggestive of a cell. So he

had got up. Already he felt worse for doing so. The brightness of the morning air brought on his headache again. He decided that experiments in the way of living were not for a man of his age.

If it had been only himself to consider he would have handled Brentano differently. He would have told him to go to Hell. Not in so many words perhaps. But in words to that effect. And then if Mr. Brentano had really proceeded against him for false pretences—he felt little cold hands of horror clutching at his heart every time that he thought of the word—he would have done something dramatic and final like taking his own life. Ending everything with a single scarlet sweep of the razor! Or putting his head in a gas oven. But he remembered there were no gas ovens on board. Or loading his pockets with heavy things and jumping overboard. He had heard that death was instantaneous that way. It was something to do with the suck of the screws. A Lascar who had gone overboard off one of the Company's boats, so Dr. Jarvis had told him, had been recovered in five sections and not complete at that. Mr. Doyle shuddered. A horrid death. The human end at its most dreadful. But rather than submit to Mr. Brentano's extortions he would do it. Off the boat deck on a purple, starlit night. The shouts. The consternation. The lighted portholes as he swept past. The dark water rushing up. The impact, like a stone falling into a deep well. And then, oblivion. Yes, he would submit gladly even to that if it weren't for Gratia. But he recognised that for her sake he must put all desperate thoughts of violent death out of his head, must find another and a gentler way.

He wished that Gratia liked Mr. Brentano just a little better.

It was simply because of her that he realised that he would have to choose the other way. He could not let Gratia go into

the world as the daughter of a suicide. He could not allow her to face the perils of life fatherless and alone. There was nothing for it. He must smother his own pride and persuade Gratia for her own good to agree to Mr. Brentano's proposal.

How to do it? That was the problem. There must be a way he was sure. But he was equally sure he would not be able to think of it. He needed help. And now in the hour of emergency Mr. Brentano was missing. There was no one else. Somehow he could not see the Captain being helpful. He appreciated that the Captain would be interested; but he was not by any means sure that the Captain really liked him. Then he thought of Stephen. He knew that Stephen liked him. They had sat together so many times. Probably Stephen was sitting alone somewhere now wishing that Mr. Doyle would search him out and have a chat with him. Mr. Doyle began the search.

Automatically he went first to the bar. Stephen was not there. He tried the saloon. It was empty except for the lady who had heard the scream. She was industriously writing postcards. She was evidently a woman with a large circle of acquaintances and very few friends: no one had ever seen her write a letter. Mr. Doyle left her. Afterwards he tried the bar again, and the dining-room. For a moment of sudden panic he was afraid that something must have happened. Then he remembered the cabin.

It was a happy thought. "Mind if I come in?" he asked.

As he was already inside, Stephen offered him a chair.

"It's about my daughter Gratia," said Mr. Doyle breathlessly. Stephen looked at him coldly. Mr. Doyle sensed a criticism of himself at once. "Of course, it's the finest thing in the world for her, absolutely the finest thing. Much too good a chance to let it slip by. And Gratia knows it. She quite understands the position, really she does. She realises," Mr. Doyle finished lamely, "that's she a very lucky girl."

"Then what's the trouble?" Stephen asked.

"It's simply that she's a bit upset at the moment. Everything's come as rather a shock to her. She can't bring herself to look facts in the face. In short she . . ."

"She's refused to marry him," suggested Stephen.

"Exactly. She's refused, point-blank." Mr. Doyle was delighted his companion had tumbled so readily to seeing how things were. His delight was shattered, however.

"Then why make her do it?" Stephen asked.

Mr. Doyle realised that once more he must humble his pride before a stranger. "There are private reasons," he said loftily. "Reasons that don't leave me a free agent." He was pleased with the remark. It showed that even if he were forced to humble his pride he was humbling it with dignity.

"And are you satisfied?" Stephen asked.

"Why, of course," said Mr. Doyle in astonishment. "She'll have to get married eventually, and she might do a lot worse than Brentano. There are plenty of girls, girls of good family and position, I mean, have had their eye on him for years; literally years. He's a thoroughly nice fellow and it's time he settled down. He could give her everything a wife could want. And Gratia's just the girl for him. She's quiet and affectionate and gentle and obedient . . ."

"But she won't marry him," Stephen reminded him.

"Just so," said Mr. Doyle. "Now I was wondering, as you've been such a good friend to her, whether you could possibly put it to her so that she sees things in a different light. Bring me into it if you like. Explain how awkward her attitude makes things for me. Tell her point-blank, if you want to, that if she doesn't see her way to do it, it's all up with her poor old Dad." Mr. Doyle allowed a smile of gentle resignation to cross his face. "You must realise that I couldn't possibly tell her that myself. I've lain awake night after night wondering

how I could tell her, and I've decided I couldn't. You can tell her that too if you like. If she does the right thing now there's a happy life for both of us. If she does anything headstrong, God knows what'll happen. You see she's motherless. She's got no one to advise and guide her but me. You understand?"

"Yes, I understand."

"Then you'll do it. You'll explain how things are with me." Stephen nodded.

"You know what I want you to say. Don't you?" Mr. Doyle had the actor's natural nervousness about seeing an understudy prepare to play a difficult part.

"I do," said Stephen grimly.

MR. DOYLE knocked at Gratia's door and waited. "It's me," he said.

There was silence. Mr. Doyle leant back and whispered in Stephen's ear, "She's being difficult. I told you she was," then he knocked again.

Still there was no answer. "Gratia, darling," Mr. Doyle called out louder. "I've brought you a visitor." There was still silence, and Mr. Doyle added as an afterthought, "It's not Mr. Brentano."

He put his ear to the keyhole and listened. "She's coming to the door," he reported confidentially. "She's letting us in." Before he could say anything more the cabin door was jerked open. Mr. Doyle almost fell into her arms.

Gratia stood there. She had obviously been crying. Her eyes

were red and lined. But she was defiant and rebellious. "I've told you not to come here," she said. "I'm not ready yet, I haven't decided." She suddenly caught sight of Stephen. "What do you want?" she asked.

Mr. Doyle stepped forward. He had a gentle affectionate smile on his face, but he remembered to put his foot in the door. "It's Mr. MacFadyen, dear," he said. "He was asking after you. I told him you had not been well."

Gratia looked at Stephen without speaking. At that moment Stephen winked. It was a clumsy amateur wink, altogether in a class below the deep meaning winks of Mr. Brentano. But it worked. Gratia understood.

"I thought it would do you good to see someone else," Mr. Doyle went on. "I couldn't bear to think of you down here ill while I was up on deck having a good . . ." Mr. Doyle evidently reflected that it would sound callous to confess to having a good time, so he added hastily, "up on the deck. I felt you ought to see a different face." Gratia stepped back for them to come into the cabin. "I'm afraid everything's in an awful mess," she said.

She was right. On the bed there were three books open and lying face downwards. A carton of sweets from which some were spilled on the sheets lay beside them. Across the bed at the bottom hung a piece of sewing with the needle, and thread still hanging from it, stuck crosswise into it. There was a sweet sickly mixed smell of scent and of the sweets she had been eating. The whole cabin was like the bedroom in which a child has been ill and has tried to amuse itself. Stephen recalled that Gratia had been a prisoner for days.

Mr. Doyle was clearly delighted at the turn which events had taken. "I wonder," he said, edging towards the door, "if you would mind if I left you for a moment. The Captain promised to show me something."

Gratia ignored her father so completely that Mr. Doyle wondered for a moment if what he had just said sounded so improbable that he ought to withdraw it. He thought better of it, however, and went out without saying anything. As he went he signalled to Stephen to begin. Once outside the cabin door he passed a handkerchief across his forehead. He was always relieved to get away from Gratia when she was in that mood. He had felt the same in the presence of her mother.

"What's this about you marrying Brentano?" Stephen asked abruptly, as soon as the door was shut.

"I suppose father's told you everything."

"He told me enough," Stephen replied.

"What's it to do with you anyhow?" Gratia passed her hand wearily across her forehead.

"I thought," said Stephen, "I'd see if I could help."

"You can't do anything," Gratia said. "Nobody can."

"I'm not so sure," said Stephen. "Suppose we try to find you a job. You'd be independent then."

"What sort of job?" she asked.

"Secretary or something," Stephen replied. "I've got some friends out there I'll ask. There must be something."

"Do you think you can?"

"I'll do my best," he said. Now that he had said it he was amazed at himself. He was not that sort of man at all. What he had just promised was as irrevocable as a will. And having promised it he felt awkward in Gratia's presence. He was about to say something else when there was a sound in the alleyway outside. The handle turned a little, but the door did not open.

"That's probably father," Gratia said.

It was her father. A thin slice of him came into view through the ventilating screen. It promptly disappeared

again when he saw that he was observed. Mr. Doyle had evidently come back after all to see how things were progressing.

"Remember what I told you," said Stephen quickly. Gratia nodded. Her eyes were bright and strangely shining. She was biting her lower lip so hard that it was almost white. It occurred to Stephen that she might be about to cry again. He took her hand hurriedly in his and held it for a moment. Then he went out to join Mr. Doyle. But Mr. Doyle had gone again.

Outside the door in his place stood Captain Curly. He was putting his tie straight. His eyebrows went up perceptibly on seeing Stephen. "Been offering your congratulations?" he asked. "I was just about to do so. Mr. Doyle has just told me the exciting news."

He knocked on the door and waited. A few moments later he knocked again.

Mr. Doyle was waiting at the top of the stairs for Stephen. "Did you get on all right?" he asked anxiously.

Stephen nodded.

Mr. Doyle gave a sigh of relief. "She is probably more reasonable with other people," Mr. Doyle said. "She was certainly very difficult with me. What did she say? Brentano's waiting upstairs very anxious. He simply won't take no for an answer."

When they got on deck Mr. Brentano was pacing backwards and forwards like an admiral. He was in a bad temper. As soon as he saw Mr. Doyle he resumed the conversation at the point where it had obviously been left off. "A nice fool, I look, don't I," he began angrily, "having to ask someone else how Gratia is? And didn't I tell you to keep your mouth shut?"

Mr. Doyle nodded helplessly.

"Well, why didn't you? I've had the Captain clucking round me this morning like a broody hen. He seemed to think he was my best man. I let him know he wasn't."

"What did Dr. Jarvis say?" asked Mr. Doyle, desperately trying to turn the conversation into some channel that was less dangerous to himself.

"Jarvis is a fool," said Mr. Brentano. "He'd have been hanged for murder years ago if he hadn't been a doctor. Said I'd got blood pressure. I asked him if he knew anyone who'd lived my kind of life out East who hadn't. And when I asked him what he would suggest doing for it he said that I was to knock off all alcohol and red meat and tobacco. It makes me sick, all that kind of talk. My God, there was a German doctor out in Singapore who could have mixed me a pick-me-up that would have put me right by now. Like flame it was. It would have woken up a corpse."

Mr. Brentano turned abruptly to Stephen and said in a voice clearly intended to sound apologetic, "Bear with a sore head to-day. That's me. If you ever have blood pressure you'll know what it's like. It's like drums in your head all beating at once. Goes on all the time. It's been worse ever since I got on this blasted ship. It gets behind your eyes so that you feel as if they were going to pop out of your head. Then there's a pain just over my back stud. And you feel as though you were floating. I can hardly feel my feet now." Mr. Brentano demonstrated a brief clog dance to show how out of touch with himself he was. "Well, let's hear it. Did she send her love?"

"Not exactly," said Stephen.

"Oh, but she did earlier," Mr. Doyle interrupted. "Most distinctly she did."

"Then what did she do?" asked Mr. Brentano, ignoring Doyle altogether.

"As a matter of fact she said that she wanted time to consider it," Stephen replied.

"She's coming round to our point of view, really she is," Mr. Doyle interposed.

"Shut up," said Mr. Brentano. "What else had she got to say?"

"Not very much," said Stephen.

"So it's all off for the present is it?" said Mr. Brentano slowly.

"No, really it isn't," Mr. Doyle began again. "That isn't a bit the way she's feeling. She said only last night . . ."

"Look here, Doyle," said Mr. Brentano. "You've done enough mischief to-day. Go down below and stay down. If I want you I'll send for you."

Mr. Doyle could not believe that he'd really been sent away. He kept taking little steps forward and back again. It was only when Mr. Brentano walked up to him and gave him a violent shove that Mr. Doyle really understood. Even then he turned at the top of the deck stairs and waited as if expecting that they would call him back. Mr. Brentano took two steps towards him: Mr. Doyle disappeared instantly out of sight down the stairs.

Mr. Brentano took out a large-size silk handkerchief and passed it across his forehead. He was a man who sweated easily. "God," he said, "he's a pain in the neck. I'm sorry I went off the deep end just now, but this thing's getting on my nerves. I want to get it cleared up so that I shall know where I stand. It's bad enough without Doyle going and mucking things up behind my back. Why couldn't he have waited for me to do it my way? I wanted to leave it until it was her birthday and then make a sort of birthday present of it. Get up a little party and have some music and dancing. Everything jolly and above board. But old Doyle goes down and wakes her

up when she's sea-sick and frightens her out of her mind. Ought to have had more consideration. Between the two of us how does she feel about it? "

"If you want to know the truth," said Stephen, "she doesn't."

Mr. Brentano pushed out his lower lip. "Do you think that's definite?" he asked.

"It sounded definite," Stephen told him truthfully.

"You mean she's turned me down?" Mr. Brentano seemed dazed by it. "But she can't do that." He gave a short, nervous laugh. "She doesn't understand how things are. She ought to go down on her knees to me. And she treats me like this. It's Doyle's doing. I'm going down to tell him what's coming to him."

"I shouldn't," said Stephen. "It won't do any good." But Mr. Brentano had left him. He had gone below to find Mr. Doyle.

Stephen remained on deck looking out at the sea. Perhaps he stayed on deck too long. He was finding out what generations of men had found out before him, that when the mind is overloaded with anxiety and worry there are few better sights than the sea. And he did not want to leave it. He made his way, contrary to the laws of class distinction on the high seas, across the barrier that divides the Third from the First, and stood looking down at the rollers of green water through which the ship was masterfully and efficiently cutting. Then he climbed up on to the boat deck. The sea looked brighter from there; not green any longer, as it had done when he peered straight down into it. On the skyline there were other ships passing remotely on their several ways. An oil-tanker, so low in the water that every wave that hit her spread clean over her decks as though she were being sponged, slid by travelling hard for England.

From the bridge Captain Curly examined the tanker through his binoculars. It was exactly like every other tanker he had ever seen, a twin of vessels he had met nearly submerged nosing their way through half the waters of the globe. As there was apparently nothing whatever wrong or unusual about it Captain Curly looked away. It was then that he noticed Stephen.

He studied him closely. Studying other people was Captain Curly's major occupation in life other than navigation. He brought to it the care and critical observation of an expert. The first thing that struck him about Stephen was that his head, usually carried high in the manner of an athlete, was now inclined forward as though Stephen were looking at his feet. Clearly he was deep in thought. He seemed depressed, moreover. He hadn't been like that when he first came on board. Then he had been unobtrusively but manifestly self-confident. Something must have happened while he was on board. Could it be a wireless message? So far as he was aware, Stephen had not received one. He generally heard if a passenger did so. The passengers on the *Tusitala* were not usually of the sort that received radio messages; the breathless rush of the twentieth century passed them by. It did not matter very much to most of them whether they heard their news to-day or to-morrow or next week. As often as not they were missionaries and had none to hear. Captain Curly decided therefore that he would find out about Stephen. He resented not knowing. It seemed to him almost like a breach of confidence that he had not been told.

The more he looked the more intrigued he became. Never had he seen anyone stand longer in one position than Stephen. The Captain even left the shelter of the wheelhouse and went to the end of the bridge, so that he could peer sideways at Stephen to see if he was all right. "He's got something on his

mind," the Captain said with customary sagacity. "He's got himself mixed up with this Brentano engagement. Probably he tried to get the Doyle girl for himself, and now Brentano has come along and put his nose out of joint, and he is feeling sick about it. Either that or the Doyle girl has been flirting with him and leading him up the path, simply because she'd got Brentano round her little finger and wants to have her fling before she finally gets tied up. Either one or the other." The Captain was a specialist in human nature.

Finally Stephen took his deck chair and sat down. He went on with his private thoughts, which were painful and absorbing. He had been standing on the deck so long that there seemed to be something missing when he moved. Captain Curly got quite a shock when he looked for him and found him gone.

Stephen spent the day on deck. He felt that he needed free air in which to think things out. It was either the open deck with the fresh breeze carrying across it, or the dining-saloon of the *Tusitala*, with the smile of the chief steward opening like an indiarubber flower. The choice did not call for long consideration. He stayed on deck. The deck steward quite understood the situation. He hurriedly set about making himself indispensable: he brought lunch up on deck on a tray as though it were a privilege. Not the least of the services that the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Co. rendered its passengers was that it paid its stewards wages that were so small that the stewards were only too eager to do little things that might earn them enough in tips to make life worth living.

Stephen ate his lunch alone and without interruption.

He had another reason for remaining on deck. Dr. Jarvis had been up and told him that by tea time—the doctor had never taken to the nautical fashion of referring to time by bells

and watches; he preferred the simpler calculation of meals and snacks—they would be seeing land.

For a time there was nothing. Then a cloud appeared and hung low over the horizon. Stephen went below and got his binoculars. The cabin seemed unnaturally hot and stuffy. He untwisted the clumsy brass screws and swung the porthole open. The air from without, which had seemed warm enough on deck, smote him as though the door of an ice chest had been opened. He went up on deck again and brushed a light perspiration from his forehead.

Through his binoculars the cloud resolved itself into land. It was hills and mountains rising from the sea. It was real. It was the good earth. People lived there. Stephen felt the natural elation of the land-born animal at sea when at last he sees something that is not water. His whole heart rushed out to it. It was Capri.

Half an hour later it was still Capri, but as far away as ever.

It was early evening, a blue luminous dusk, before the *Tusitala* passed it.

The heating of the air seemed fragile and easily disturbed. A cool wind blew from the shore and played around Stephen's throat. He could feel it like a touch. Dr. Jarvis had come up on deck again to indulge in a few romantic imaginings. He pointed out a dark smudge that he assured Stephen was Vesuvius towering in the sky. He was wrong geographically, wrong by some fifteen miles and half-a-dozen peaks. But in the spirit of the moment, in the excitement in which he gave the information he was supremely and undeniably right.

Gradually the *Tusitala* made its way across the bay. Then one by one the lights of Naples appeared; they glittered like a Christmas tree seen in a distant drawing-room. Captain Curly, his work done so far as he was allowed, rang off his

engines and waited for the pilot. The pilot came out in a small boat, the *Maria Marconi*. He was short and fat, and had difficulty in climbing aboard. He apparently knew his job however. He shook hands with Captain Curly in a manner which indicated that he appreciated that he was addressing someone of rank and importance, and led the *Tusitala* to the Porto Granda gently and without mishap.

Only two people, a young man and his younger wife, joined the boat at Naples. They had a lot of new-looking cases, and he kept his arm round her wherever they went. They were obviously on their honeymoon. It seemed a considerable deviation on the steamship's part to have gone to Naples to pick up a pair of lovers. And in a tacit uncomplaining fashion the entire ship seemed to be aware of it and resent it. Though they were cheerful and agreeable and obviously anxious to please they did not enter into the full communal life of the ship. They were still referred to as "the couple who got on at Naples" when the boat reached Penang.

When Stephen had seen them aboard he went below. He had not realised how cold he was. He was shivering. And he was as far from an answer to his problems as when he had gone on deck.

There was no doubt about it next morning. He did not feel well. Not a bit well. He sat up in his bunk and shook his head as though trying to cast off something that was heavy. It was no use. A hot heavy veil seemed to have descended upon him, cutting him off from everything. Even his hands felt thick and unfamiliar. His eyes were hot and burning as if he had been staring into a fire. Across his forehead a band of pain had been drawn. He lay down again hurriedly and at once the band tightened and little pulses in his forehead began to throb and drum.

He dozed off again and woke to find himself no better. He

lay for a while on his back wondering what he had eaten. It might well have been almost anything on the *Tusitala's* menu. Then slowly it occurred to him that it might simply be a chill that he had caught staying up on deck too long. So far as that went it might be anything; even measles. The only thing that was certain was that it was something.

He got out of bed confident that exercise would throw it off. He felt worse when on his feet. He managed to squeeze a sponge of cold water over his head, then returned to bed shivering. He declined the breakfast which the steward with passionate zeal and affection for his task tried to force on him. Halfway through the morning, he decided that it was no use, he must send for Dr. Jarvis. That also he realised would probably be of no use.

Dr. Jarvis took some time in coming. He could not at first be found. He was at last discovered by the steward sitting in a sheltered corner of the boat deck, asleep. On his lap lay a copy of the *Quarterly Journal of Medicine*. Dr. Jarvis liked to keep in touch with the latest developments in the subject. He had a great respect for research.

He roused himself at once and came down to the cabin. Once inside he assumed the vicarious dignity which uniform and a purpose give to even the mildest and least assuming of men. "Tummy upset, eh?" he asked as he had asked hundreds of sea-sick passengers in his time.

When he heard that it was not sea sickness, Dr. Jarvis came over and looked at Stephen suspiciously. He hoped that it wasn't going to be anything obstinate and obscure. The lady in the Third had already been back to him because he had left a portion of her tooth unextracted. She had given him quite enough trouble on the trip already.

He took Stephen's hand and felt his pulse. For a moment he was appalled. He could not make out what was the matter.

Then he realised that he must have forgotten to wind his watch. It had stopped.

There was a space during which Dr. Jarvis was loath to give an opinion. He screwed his face up into an expression of inscrutable wisdom and pronounced that Stephen was suffering from fever. Stephen thanked him.

"It's a funny thing," said Dr. Jarvis setting himself on the side of the bed, "but a lot of passengers get it in the neck just about here. It's the air that does it. It's so much warmer that people think it's hot. And, of course, it isn't. It's a damn treacherous climate like the Riviera. It's so cold and wretched there in winter that all the old invalids feel so rotten that they're sure they'd be dead if they were in London. And so they stay on. That's what keeps the place going. It's the same here. Talk about its being warm. Why there's a wind that blows up there"—with a wave of his hand Dr. Jarvis indicated a region situated somewhere between Moscow and Madrid "that would freeze the marrow in a scal. That's probably what got you. Have to take a lot of care of yourself on a voyage. I've seen 'em go off just like that"—Dr. Jarvis snapped his fingers in the air—"simply through leaving off a cotton undervest on the wrong side of Port Said."

"Is this going to be a long job?" Stephen asked.

Dr. Jarvis did not care to commit himself off hand. "I'll be in to see you to-morrow," he said, as though he were still in practice on land and his fee depended on it. "You're my second patient this morning. I've just been seeing Miss Doyle."

"How is she?" Stephen asked. He hoped that his voice did nothing to betray his anxiety.

"All on edge," Dr. Jarvis replied. "Nerves quite raw. She's as jumpy as a kitten. It's something on her mind. She's an impressionable sort of person. I was told that she'd just

got engaged. Quite likely it's simply that she's in love. It often gives them a bit of a temperature. Who's she engaged to?"

For a moment Stephen was silent. Dr. Jarvis's cure for a headache seemed calculated to make it worse. He shut his eyes and said slowly and distinctly, "She's not engaged to anyone. I believe that Mr. Brentano asked Mr. Doyle if he was agreeable. But I don't think it's coming to anything."

He felt better after he had given the lie to the rumour.

"I see, I see," said Dr. Jarvis, rubbing his hands at the thought of how vexed the dapper little Captain would be when he found that his ship's surgeon had snapped up a piece of good gossip from under his very nose. "I understand things now. She's in love with Mr. Brentano, and her father won't allow it. I wonder why. Probably he's married already or something. He's the sort that attracts women. Fine virile type. Do you think we could do anything about it? It may simply be selfishness on her father's part. She's clearly making herself ill over the man. I'll see what I can do. Maybe a hint dropped at the right moment. . . ."

"I shouldn't do that," said Stephen wearily. "It won't do any good."

"Oh, but I must," exclaimed Dr. Jarvis. "She's a very charming girl. I've grown fond of her. The modern doctor cures as much through the mind as through the body you know. You just drop off to sleep again. I will send you down the aspirin."

Dr. Jarvis went off and Stephen noticed that he had left his *Quarterly Journal of Medicine* behind him. He read part of an article on Endocrinology, and dropped off to sleep.

The day passed slowly. Bells rang and a short blast from the ship's whistle announced that it was midday. It seemed to be a busy day. There was every kind of noise going on the

whole time. The cabin next to Stephen's was empty. Someone went in and with something heavy began banging on the ventilating pipe. The blows reverberated through his head as though the unknown hammer had been hitting him personally. When Stephen felt that he could bear it no longer the hammering ceased and the invisible workman went out of the cabin leaving the door unlocked and banging after him. The engines also seemed to be going wrong. They apparently required frequent and noisy treatment. The ventilation pipe when hit was as resonant as a cymbal. But whatever was being hit down in the engine-room boomed like a drum. The man who was doing the drumming was evidently something of an artist, too. There was a kind of rhythm about his work.

Stephen had just fallen into a restless and uneasy sleep, when there came a fumbling knock at the door. Stephen said nothing, hoping that whoever it was would go away. But when it occurred again he realised that there was nothing for it but to ask the person outside to come in. He did so. It was Mr. Doyle.

Mr. Doyle was sympathetic, aggrieved and embarrassed in about equal measure. In consequence neither his sympathy nor his grievance were entirely satisfactory, or altogether convincing; his grievance blunted his sympathy, and his sympathy took the edge off his grievance. Only his embarrassment remained unimpaired by the association.

"I hope you're better," he exclaimed. "It's probably nothing." He realised that this sounded unsympathetic and added hurriedly, "Of course I'm sure you feel rotten now. Dr. Jarvis told me you'd caught a chill. I wanted to say how sorry I was. I had to come and see you. It's about Gratia. She's been simply terrible. I can't do anything with her. She's adamant. I can't make her see things in their real light at all. She thinks of nothing but herself."

"You can't force it on her if she doesn't want it," observed Stephen.

"Oh, I know," Mr. Doyle assured him. "That's what I'm always saying to myself. If she doesn't do it willingly, she mustn't do it at all. But I was hoping that perhaps you would have another word with her for me. You see she respects you. She looks upon you as a friend. She said as much to me. You understand human nature, that's what it is. Will you come and try and do something?"

Stephen shook his head.

"Perhaps when you feel a little stronger. Possibly to-morrow morning?" Mr. Doyle suggested.

"But I can't *make* her do it," Stephen said.

"But I don't want to *make* her," Mr. Doyle explained with vehemence. "I wouldn't dream of such a thing. She's my own daughter. It's her happiness I'm thinking of all the time. I wouldn't have asked you if I'd known you'd think of such a thing. Really I wouldn't. I wouldn't have asked you in any case if Gratia hadn't said she wanted to see you."

Stephen looked at Mr. Doyle through half closed eyes. At the same moment Mr. Doyle looked sideways at him to see if the mention of Gratia's name had had its effect. Their eyes met. Mr. Doyle looked away.

"What did she say exactly?" Stephen asked.

"She said that . . . that . . . she'd like to see you," replied Mr. Doyle.

Stephen thought of all the liars he had ever met, and decided that Mr. Doyle was the clumsiest. "She's very upset by the whole business," Mr. Doyle added. "She doesn't know a soul on the ship except the three of us."

"Oh, all right," said Stephen. "I'll have a word with her." He realised that probably she needed a little cheering.

"I knew you would. It's awfully kind of you. Shall I give you a hand?"

Stephen sat up in bed. His head spun round on his shoulders. Very cautiously he set one foot on the floor and then the other. His stomach suddenly became the centre of rebellion. It didn't like the rest of his body, and the rest of his body didn't like it. Without warning he was lavishly and spectacularly sick. . . . He didn't go down and see Gratia. Instead he lay in his bunk at first dozing and shivering, and then when Dr. Jarvis's measures had begun to have their effect, dozing and sweating. The day passed neither quickly nor slowly: it merely passed. There seemed to be a lot of it and plenty more to come. He woke from time to time to find that it was still day and other people were going about their business energetically and noisily. There was one interruption when the steward came down with a plate of fruit, with Mr. Doyle's compliments. Stephen was puzzled until he remembered that all the fruit on the ship was free. Then he went off to sleep again.

The last time he looked in the direction of the porthole, he noticed that the sky was no longer there as a disc of light. Night had arrived suddenly and unexpected.

The *Tusitala's* bugler had just sounded the dinner call when there was a hearty rap on the door. It was Mr. Brentano. He came straight in without waiting for an answer. "How's the patient?" he asked in a loud cheerful voice. "Like the light on? You can't lie here in the dark like an old corpse." He switched on the lamp that hung over Stephen's bed and inspected him. "You look putrid," he said. "I should take things easy for a bit. Just lie here and enjoy yourself. Has Doyle been down?"

"Yes," said Stephen. "He's been down."

"What did he want?" asked Mr. Brentano.

"He was worried about Gratia."

"The trouble with Doyle," said Mr. Brentano sitting himself heavily on the end of Stephen's bunk, "is that he doesn't know when to mind his own business. Come to mention it, I wasn't exactly pleased to hear that he'd asked you to go and see Gratia before. Made me look a fool."

"How does everything stand now?" Stephen asked.

"He's made it worse," said Mr. Brentano. "He's been making it worse ever since he told her himself. If he'd left it to me everything would have been all right by now. She'd be up on deck showing off her ring. Instead of that she's shut herself in her cabin and won't see a soul."

"It's pretty bad," said Stephen.

"It's Hell," replied Mr. Brentano.

"It was Gratia I was thinking of," said Stephen quietly.

"The best thing that could happen to Gratia," said Mr. Brentano with emphasis, "would be for someone to take her away from that father of hers by force. He's just a leech. He'd suck her dry if he got the chance. He'd suck anyone dry. He'd suck me dry if I'd let him. And you can't have Gratia without having her father; Doyle will see to that."

"Then what's going to happen?"

"I'm going to have her, father and all," said Mr. Brentano.

"Doyle can give her away and you can be best man. In six months' time we shall be able to look back and laugh at the muck Doyle made of things."

"But suppose she won't?" Stephen asked.

Mr. Brentano broke into a slow significant smile. "I shall apply a little pressure to her father," he said bringing his two hands together with the action of a man crushing a lemon into a glass. "Nothing to hurt, but enough to show him that I mean business, real business. My dear chap"—Mr. Brentano bent forward confidentially—"don't look at me as though you disapprove. You know as well as I do that the worst thing that

could happen would be to leave Gratia where she is. She's not safe. If she won't accept a decent offer when she gets one she may have to accept one of the other sort."

"Meaning what?"

"Simply that Doyle doesn't move in exactly the highest circles out East. They're a bloody awful lot he gets round him out there. They'd be after Gratia like a pack of dogs. You don't know the life like I do."

Stephen surveyed Mr. Brentano with a mixture of distaste and bewilderment. That he was a blackguard was evident. But he was a blackguard with a makeshift morality of his own. Providing you were on his side he was probably not really a blackguard at all.

"And mind you," Mr. Brentano resumed with a little shrug of self-depreciation, "if she agreed to marry me she'd know what it was like to come into a fortune. Between you and me I'm not what you'd call a poor man. Mind you, I've worked for it"—as a self-made man Mr. Brentano always took good care to leave the maker's name showing—"but if she wants half, there it is for her as soon as she says the word."

"It'll work itself out somehow I suppose," said Stephen wearily. His head was throbbing: every word had to be squeezed out painfully. "But I shouldn't count on anything if I were you."

"But what's to stop me?" asked Mr. Brentano in amazement. "It can't be Doyle. He's too scared of his own skin to try any funny business. And it can't be Gratia. If she doesn't do it she must realise there's nothing else she can do. And there's no one else on this outfit except you and me and the Captain—and he's married."

The self-assurance of Mr. Brentano was magnificent. Stephen realised that he did not exist as far as he was concerned. He found himself strangely resenting it. He decided

that it might be worth while establishing the fact of his existence. "Well, I'm not married," he pointed out. "You'd better be careful."

For a moment Mr. Brentano paused. Then he took the obstacle in his stride. He gave a loud guffaw. "One up for you," he said. "You had me there. But you're not the marrying sort, anyone could see that. Women don't mean a thing to you. I knew a chap just like you once. Married a lady missionary when he was fifty. She was five years older than him but they had three kids; all boys. The natives thought it was a miracle. And so it was, in a manner of speaking. Got him no end of converts. He's a bishop out in India now. Mind you, don't think I don't envy you. I envy anyone who can look at a woman as though she wasn't there. Women have been a blasted nuisance to me in my time. And now when I thought I'd got over that sort of thing, along comes Gratia, and I'm just like a blooming two-year-old about her."

Mr. Brentano smiled a sentimental smile. He was as evidently as pleased about it as a mother who has been mistaken for her own daughter. He looked at his watch. "What time are you having your dinner?" he asked.

"I'm not having any dinner," Stephen told him.

"Oh, but you must, my dear fellow," Mr. Brentano assured him. "Mustn't let the sea get the better of you like this. Have a champagne cocktail with me first and then you'll find you want your dinner all right. I should have fish and meat, and cut out the soup as you're on your back. Champagne cocktails for two it is then."

"No, really, thanks," Stephen protested.

But Mr. Brentano had already rung for the steward.

GRATIA was sitting alone in her cabin. She had been having another heart to heart talk with her father. His solicitude was hourly growing greater. This time he had brought up an altogether new argument. Over Gratia's cradle, it turned out, Mr. Doyle had promised his now dead wife that he would do everything for their daughter that it is humanly possible for a man to do, everything that would enable her to enjoy the advantages that had been denied to her parents. And he had failed. Mr. Doyle admitted frankly that he had failed. But there was still a chance that Gratia could make things all right. And Mr. Brentano was that chance. There lay the only hope of Mr. Doyle's peace of mind in his old age. He put the whole thing up to Gratia without pressure or prejudice. And she had turned it down. Turned it down abruptly and rudely. Mr. Doyle could hardly believe it. She had spoken to him as though he were dirt. And indeed he had felt like dirt when Gratia was speaking to him. It was horrible. When Gratia's voice was raised it was so like her mother's that it was uncanny. Gratia had accused him of every kind of crime. She had called him a drunkard. His own daughter calling him that: it was unthinkable. A man of hastier temper might have struck her for it. He could not imagine how she could ever have thought of saying such things. She had called him "filthy and disgusting." It was an outrage. If it had been anyone else he would have taken an action against them for slander. But his own daughter—it sickened him to think of it.

Gratia was feeling sick too. For Mr. Brentano she felt an open hatred that he could ever have believed such a thing

possible. She wished for his sake that it had never been suggested. Up to this moment she had liked him, had enjoyed the time they had had all three together in England. It had been the first treat of her life. Now she was disgusted. She had not understood then.

She felt disappointed in Stephen too. He had been so painfully eager to help and now he had not even troubled to see her. She realised quite clearly that she could expect nothing tangible from him. If she was going to rescue herself from the mess into which her father had landed her she realised that she would have to do it herself. But not entirely by herself. She could hang things out till she reached Penang and then make a dash for it. There was Father Xavier there, and the Sisters of the Seven Wounds. They would be glad to have her. They wouldn't turn her away because she hadn't any money. Whether they could keep her if Mr. Doyle objected she didn't know. At the back of her mind was the fear that until she was twenty-one she was required by law to do whatever her father told her. But she could try. She had great faith in the character and integrity of Father Xavier.

Dr. Jarvis paid her a surprise visit. She was quite pleased to see him. It was dull down in the cabin with only the stewardess for company. The stewardess was a pince-nezed grey-haired woman who had come down in the world. She felt that her present occupation was beneath her and lived in constant fear of being transferred to the Second Class where she might be called upon to wait on someone whom she had known socially when she was still a lady. In consequence her service was worse and her presence less prepossessing than that of the other stewardesses who had mostly risen arduously and perseveringly through the various stages of domestic labour on land before they had achieved their present enviable lives of dignity and excitement.

Mr. Brentano was keeping off for the present. There was no change of society to be anticipated from that quarter. Her father had gone off white and shaking after their last interview. The memory of him remained. He had been standing under the ventilating pipe, whilst she had been talking to him, and the air had blown his straggling white hair into a kind of halo. He had looked rather like a small and horrified Angora rabbit crouching with its back to the wind. She knew that he would have to revive himself before he could pluck up the courage to come back again. Stephen had let her down; simply not troubled to come and see her. If she wanted to see a change of face, and there was nothing she wanted more, it was clearly Dr. Jarvis or nothing.

Dr. Jarvis was delighted. He had reached the age when he felt the need for politeness. To find that a young girl, whom he scarcely knew, was sincerely glad to see him was almost as pleasing as to be congratulated by the Captain on his excellence as a ship's surgeon; almost as pleasing and far more easily achieved.

"Well," said Dr. Jarvis in a masterpiece of professional tact, "and how's the heart this morning?"

"Oh, I'm all right," Gratia assured him. "It's just that I didn't want to go up on deck. I'd rather stay here."

"Now, my dear young lady," Dr. Jarvis began; he thought he'd never seen a more beautiful tragic face on a girl in all his life, "you can't deceive me. If a girl of your age stays down in her cabin and won't see anyone—and someone in particular—it stands to reason that there must be a reason. I don't say that it's your fault or that it's anything to do with you really. It may be because of someone else who won't let you see the other person." Dr. Jarvis paused for a moment entangled in his own subtlety and cleverness. "But believe me, there must be another person, and there is someone else."

Gratia looked at Dr. Jarvis in amazement.

"Would you mind saying that all over again?" she asked.

Dr. Jarvis was disappointed in her. He hated a girl to be sharp and disrespectful to her elders. It seemed so unnecessary when he was trying merely to be friendly. But he persevered.

"You see, Miss Doyle," he went on, with an air that was almost Chinese in its inscrutability. "We doctors notice a lot of little things. If we didn't we shouldn't be doctors. We should just be dispensers. Now I can tell you that what you need is a change of society. One or two new faces. What would you say if I brought a friend down to see you? I'll play gooseberry if you like. You have only to say the word and your medical adviser will recommend a few visitors. You tell me and the trick's done." Dr. Jarvis smiled like a fairy godmother who has just selected a suitable pumpkin.

Gratia looked at him puzzled. He was sitting on the edge of the bunk swinging himself backwards and forwards in delight. He was obviously happy about something; about what Gratia could not imagine.

"Who would you bring down?" she asked.

"Now, who would you like it to be?" Dr. Jarvis asked. He had all his life had a teasing way with him when talking to girls. It had begun as a kind of playfulness but had hardened with use into a feeble torture not unlike that of a very large cat playing with a very small mouse. "It can be anyone you please. What about the Captain, for example?"

"He's already sent down to see how I was, thank you," replied Gratia tartly.

"Then what about Mr. MacFadyen?" Dr. Jarvis enquired. "I've just been seeing him."

Gratia shook her head.

"Then how would it do for a substitute?"—Dr. Jarvis beamed at her affectionately through his rimless glasses that

increased the air of benevolence that he was endeavouring to cultivate—"if I brought down Mr. Brentano?"

To Dr. Jarvis's surprise Gratia made no reply at all. She merely shut her lips very firmly together and said nothing. But the colour had left her face at the suggestion, leaving her paler than before. For a moment Dr. Jarvis was afraid she was going to faint and that he would have to revive her.

"I believe that Mr. Brentano is a particular friend of yours, isn't he?" he asked.

"Please don't talk about him," said Gratia. "I don't want to see him or anyone else. I just want to be left alone."

"Quite so, quite so," said Dr. Jarvis. He saw that this was a moment when it was better not to press his advantage; it was rather a moment in which to consolidate his position in retreat. "I'll leave you now."

Once outside the cabin he was surprised to find how simple it had all been. Temperature—pulse—respiration—reflex-action—everything. And all because of a lovers' tiff. Dr. Jarvis smiled to himself when he thought of the latest advances of medical research. You could, he reflected, have boiled down every ounce of Miss Doyle and analysed her drop by drop in a test tube and still have missed the simple and significant fact that she had quarrelled with her lover.

"She'll come round in time," he said to himself. "She can't keep it up. I'd give her another forty-eight hours to herself and then go down and break the door in if I were Brentano. My God, what a little handful." Dr. Jarvis envied Mr. Brentano both his young lady friend and his courage.

After Dr. Jarvis had left her, Gratia tried to take stock of the situation. She looked at her watch. It was a minute, oblong watch studded with brilliants. The hands were smaller than the second hands on most watches. Gratia was very fond of it. It had been given to her by Mr. Brentano when the three

of them had been seeing London. He had bought it for her in a shop in the Burlington Arcade, paying for it with a sheaf of notes which he held like a pack of playing cards. Gratia had noticed then his natural magnificence in matters of money. He always had a little more than the people with whom he mixed. It was this that put him so completely at his ease.

When Gratia had first been told the news that Mr. Brentano wanted to propose to her, she had felt suddenly and horribly nauseated. She had wanted to throw everything that Mr. Brentano had ever given her, even the watch, out of the port-hole into the sea. She could not bear the thought of anything that had ever been his near her. He had always, ever since she had known him, taken little liberties with her; stroking her hair and playing with it when she wore it in a heavy plait down her back, pinching her ear, holding her arm. And she had tolerated it. But now she began to feel hot and ashamed as she reflected on what his real thoughts towards her must have been during all that time. She felt that she could never bear to see him again.

Entire isolation would however be difficult, she realised. After all, they were on the same ship, and she could not remain in her cabin for ever—especially as the weather would soon begin to get hotter—the stewardess had pointed this out to her; and if she left the cabin she would be certain to run into Mr. Brentano. Moreover, he was her father's partner. Presumably whether she liked him or not she would have to see more of him in Penang. One of the disadvantages of life in the East, she gathered, was that one's circle of friends was naturally limited. People lived together as bosom friends purely because of the elementary fact that they were white and away from home. She decided that she would write to Mr. Brentano. She would set out the whole position in a letter which the stewardess could deliver. He would then know her

real feelings in the matter without having to endure the distortions of Mr. Doyle's mind. She sat down on the bed and got out her writing-pad with the thick blue notepaper which her father had given her.

"Dear Mr. Brentano," she wrote, and was pleased with the opening, "I know we can remain friends even . . ."

At that moment there was a scuffling sound at the door. It sprang suddenly open. Mr. Doyle stood there swaying. He held on to the end of the bed to support himself. He was deathly pale. When he tried to speak he could not control the words. When at last he did speak Gratia could see that he was not drunk.

"He's done it," he said, in a frightened whisper. "He's wirelessly to his solicitors to start proceedings. Against me. For false pretences. I didn't know they were false. I swear I didn't. I forgot about the other mortgage. We're lost. Oh, Gratia darling, what's to become of us?"

With a little cry he collapsed forward on to her.

THE FEVER ABATED. Dr. Jarvis stood by and marvelled. He was greatly relieved. With a fever like that there was simply no knowing what it might be. It might even be an epidemic that would run like a prairie fire the whole length of the ship. And now providentially it turned out to be nothing more than the effects of the treacherous sea-breeze and the motion of the ship. Dr. Jarvis felt like thanking Heaven for its considerateness.

Not that Stephen could leave his cabin yet. He lay there the

whole of the next day, and the day after that, alternately dozing and thinking out a plan of action. Somehow the events of the last few days had receded to a remote distance within his mind. Gratia was continually in his thoughts; but she was there as a ghost, something troubled and insubstantial, not as a creature of flesh and blood with a ticket and a cabin number. And like a ghost she haunted him. Even when he opened his dispatch case—and he was shocked to find how little work he had managed to do so far—and tried to begin revising still further the syllabus and curriculum on the mathematics side of the school, he thought more of Gratia than of mathematics. Finally he gave up trying not to think about Gratia and let her occupy his thoughts altogether. He basked in a hazy romantic dream in which no matter how events betrayed them he was always beside her.

He did not like to think of what Mr. Brentano might have meant by "pressure." But he knew only too well that any pressure that was applied to Mr. Doyle would at once be passed on to Gratia. For the hundredth time he asked himself whether he ought to have told Mr. Brentano outright what a peculiarly offensive kind of scoundrel he was and let there be open warfare between them. For the hundredth time he assured himself that taking the long view and thinking of Gratia not in terms of now or a fortnight's time, he was right in not antagonising Mr. Brentano. And for the hundredth time was forced to confess that he simply didn't know.

In the evening of the third day he was roused by Mr. Brentano knocking on his door. From the noise there was someone else as well. There was. The steward stood behind him carrying a bottle of champagne and a tray with two glasses.

"I thought I'd just come down to warm up the corpse," he said, convivially. "In the dark again?" He found the switch and put the light on. "Now we can see to talk. You're looking

better. The doctor said you were just shamming. Have a drink? ”

Stephen struggled on to his elbow and watched Mr. Brentano showing the steward a new way of uncorking champagne. He had learnt it, he said, from a man in the business. The two wrestled with the bottle for a moment, Mr. Brentano covering the top with his handkerchief. Apparently the steward was not a ready pupil. A moment later there was a loud explosion and a hiss like a rocket, and the cabin was full of the sound of champagne running to waste. Mr. Brentano performed wonders of dexterity in catching most of it.

When their glasses were full and Mr. Brentano had trodden the frothy pool on the floor into the carpet where it didn't show, he said to Stephen with an explanatory wink, “ Well, it worked. I said it would.”

“ What did? ” asked Stephen anxiously.

“ The pressure,” said Mr. Brentano, smilingly. “ Just a little gentle pressure. Not enough to hurt. I just showed him that I meant business. Anyhow, I'm going to see her to-night. She's sent for me.” Mr. Brentano raised his glass. “ Here's how,” he said, and took a deep drink. “ Too sweet,” he remarked. “ Too sweet and no body.”

“ When did you hear from Miss Doyle? ” Stephen asked.

“ This afternoon,” replied Mr. Brentano. “ She sent a letter. Sourest-faced old bitch you ever saw brought it along. Nice little letter. Said that she was sorry if there'd been any misunderstanding and that she'd like to talk things over with me. So that's why we're here.” Mr. Brentano raised his glass a second time and drank ceremonially.

Stephen smiled to himself. Gratia had told him what she was going to say to Mr. Brentano. And it would not be what Mr. Brentano was expecting. It seemed ironically just and proper that such confidence should be misplaced. And Mr.

Brentano with his champagne glass in one hand and the other tucked into the armhole of his fancy waistcoat was glittering with confidence. There was something sinister in the spectacle of him sitting there, complacent and conquering.

"She was just upset by the suddenness of it. That's all it was. Mind you, I sympathise with her. If things had been allowed to develop slowly and decently as I wanted them to, everything would have been all right. If we'd been left alone on the boat, I could have dropped a hint or two that would have let her see how matters stood. She's not slow in spotting things. There was a young chap at the hotel always tried to hand in his key the same time as Gratia. She saw through it at once. Gave him the once over, and never looked at him again. That's the kind of girl Gratia is." Mr. Brentano rubbed his hands together in the manner of a hearty eater sitting down to a good meal.

"Everything's as good as fixed up," he said.

"You don't mean——" Stephen began. *But he was interrupted.*

From the corridor there came the sound of humming. It was low, but obviously jubilant. It stopped outside Stephen's door. The humming ceased, and Mr. Doyle entered. He was back in the light-hearted clothes that Stephen had noticed that day on deck. He had shaved. A fierce little white and blue tie now budded beneath his chin, and he had found the long, imitation amber cigarette-holder. It stuck out in front of him like a bowsprit. The cigarette at the end jutted even more acutely upwards, making the whole effect more rakish and jaunty. His face wore an expression of sanguine contentment. But in his eyes there still lurked something of the ordeal through which he had been passing. They were the eyes of a man who hopes for peace after long tribulation.

"Hello," he said abruptly. "Champagne."

STEPHEN WAS BETTER, decidedly better. Instead of feeling that he could not face the deck, he now felt that he could no longer tolerate the cabin. It seemed too small for him, as though it had shrunk in on him. It was like a mummy case. He said as much to Dr. Jarvis.

"Claustrophobia is a terrible thing," observed Dr. Jarvis. "There was a patient of mine, a clergyman, who had it. He got so that he couldn't bear to be in any room that was lower than about sixty feet, which was about the height of his church. When he had these attacks he used to sleep in the church hall. He had to leave the parish in the end because the churchwarden spread the rumour that he had quarrelled with his wife and they weren't sharing a bedroom. It's a funny thing, but lots of people, good churchmen especially, think that it's a positively indecent thing for a man and wife to give up sleeping together. The poor fellow got worse; no one would have anything to do with him. He had to be shut up in the end. If you feel that way about the cabin I should try getting up for a bit."

Stephen thanked him.

"Not that I'm promising anything," Dr. Jarvis told him. "The air's still the same. You may catch another chill straight away. Coming on top of that last one it might be too much for you. The only thing that you can do is to be careful. Wrap yourself up well, and if you feel bad come back down or send for me. Don't think of me as a human being at all. I'm simply here for your convenience. Call me whenever you want me."

In a way Dr. Jarvis meant what he said; he really believed he was a martyr to his profession. He knew that Captain Curly despised him, and he disliked being despised. The only thing that restored his self-respect and for a moment suspended the Captain's unconcealed contempt was a case. Sometimes when there were two or three cases all going on at once and the Doctor would be called from his table at meals, he'd go out with a proud and purposeful air. But the Captain was usually intent upon his food and did not notice him.

Stephen dressed awkwardly and slowly. As soon as he got on his feet his little cabin seemed a quiet and desirable refuge from an exhausting and unsteady world. Finally, muffled in a greatcoat and with his hat pulled down over his face, he went on deck.

The Captain greeted him with that warm affection with which a bridge player sees a high trump brought into play. He realised that Stephen was important in the little drama that was going on at that moment on the boat deck. And, while it was amusing to calculate on the absence of Stephen from the game, it promised to be still more entertaining now that his presence would begin to make itself felt.

"And how's the patient?" asked the Captain. "A bit weak at the knees, eh?"

Stephen assured him that he was feeling much better.

The Captain was aware as always when he was speaking to Stephen that he had been, if not exactly snubbed, at least not encouraged to go on.

"Your friends are up yonder," he said, pointing in the direction of the ladder that led up to the boat deck. "They've been asking after you."

"My friends?" Stephen paused.

"Miss Doyle and her father," the Captain explained, smiling and almost purring with pleasure. The purr if not

thick growth of ginger hair with which it was covered that hers showed up startlingly white. He turned Gratia's hand this way and that, so that the sunlight could play upon the diamond. It flashed like a small beacon. "Nothing to be ashamed of there," he said approvingly, and turning towards Stephen remarked good humouredly, "If you ever want anything like it for yourself let me know. I'll give you the address of the firm. Just mention my name. Do anything for me they would."

"Thank you," said Stephen, "I'll remember it."

"The real joke is," Mr. Doyle remarked with a self-conscious titter, edging his way back into the group, "that Brentano has had it on him all the time, and we didn't know. He had it on him when he came on board. Set his heart on my little Gratia, hadn't he, dear?" Mr. Doyle kissed Gratia on the top of her head, losing his balance and stumbling forward at the same moment so that Stephen had to save him.

"What would you have done if she hadn't wanted you, eh, Brentano?" Mr. Doyle asked with gentle malice. "You might have had to go carrying it about in your pocket for years and years," he observed. Now that it was all settled there was a new note that had crept into Mr. Doyle's attitude towards his companion. It was a kind of studied insolence.

"Are you trying to be funny?" Mr. Brentano asked.

"No," Mr. Doyle assured him, perhaps not so promptly as he would have done a day or two ago. "Not at all. Only you told me yourself that marriage wasn't really in your line and that if you didn't marry Gratia you'd probably remain single for ever."

"All right," said Mr. Brentano. He was obviously trying hard not to lose his temper before Gratia. "No offence taken."

"Mind you, Brentano," Mr. Doyle explained politely, "I think it's a very beautiful ring."

"It is a beautiful ring," replied Mr. Brentano, "and it belongs to Gratia and me, doesn't it, Gratia?" Mr. Brentano gave her hand a lover's squeeze. "And Gratia can't lend it to an old friend to tide him over a bad month without my permission, see?"

"Yes," said Mr. Doyle sadly, "I see." In a moment the smile on his face flickered and almost died.

Mr. Brentano worked hard to infuse a little enthusiasm into the group. It was not an easy task. "Gratia's giving a little cocktail party to celebrate all this," he said. "She wants all her old friends to come, don't you, Gratia?"

Gratia nodded. So far she had said nothing. She remained outside. Silent and aloof.

"And you're at the top of the list," Mr. Brentano continued. "It's a little birthday party as well. Quite a little do, there'll be. The old *Tusitala* won't know herself. . . . Next Friday free?" It was an unnecessary question: at sea every day is free.

"Thank you very much, Miss Doyle," said Stephen. "I'll look forward to it."

"Capital. Let's call it fixed then," said Mr. Brentano, before Gratia could reply. "What about an appetiser? Coming down, dearie?" He put his hand under her arm and began to lift her.

"I'd rather not if you don't mind," she said. "I've got a headache." Mr. Brentano looked disappointed and a little put out. He tried hard to adapt himself to the ways of women.

"All right," he said, gently lowering Gratia back into her chair, "I'll sit up here for a bit with you." He turned in the direction of Stephen and Doyle. "You two go down," he said. "I'll be coming later."

Stephen looked back at them. Brentano had his arm round Gratia's shoulders.

Mr. Doyle was quite frank about it. "It's a great relief now that it's all over," he said, giving a sigh at the mere remembrance of the strain. "Naturally it's been a very trying time for me. You don't know the sensation yet. But you wait till you've got a daughter and then you'll know what torments a father can endure, wondering if he's done the best for her. A daughter," Mr. Doyle raised his glass as though he were drinking a toast, "is a sacred trust from Heaven. It's the early bird," he added obscurely, "that gets the biggest worm, isn't it?" He put down his glass and negligently picked up a handful of salted almonds from a dish on the bar.

The improvement in his appearance was very marked. He no longer sagged over the sides of the stool, as though he had been impaled. He sat firm and high, almost as though he were trick riding. His bow tie was aggressively prominent. It was a little blossom of silk; the sort of thing that old ladies tie on a cat. There was a new-found cockiness in his eye; the light of success was there. He had even clipped his moustache; it had a curious sideways slant. Evidently the deal had already paid its first dividend in the form of self-respect.

"He's a nice chap, Brentano," said Mr. Doyle, revelling in the first luxuries of suspended anxiety. "I like him. We've known each other for years. Done several bits of business together. I must have been very useful to Brentano in my time. Put a lot of things in his way. He's got a very good head for figures but he's impatient. Won't sit back and wait for things to turn up. Always goes out looking for them. Impatience is a terrible thing." Mr. Doyle shook his head disapprovingly and tapped the edge of his glass with a sixpence to indicate that they would have the same again. Stephen was on the point of refusing, but Mr. Doyle waved the idea aside with a gesture bordering on the magnificent.

"I've got a very nice little property out in Penang that

Brentano's got his eye on," Mr. Doyle continued. "I might agree to his offer and I might not. I'm not particularly anxious to keep the place. When a man gets to my age he wants to cut down his responsibilities. Now that Gratia's fixed up I mean to rest on my oars for a bit. You're not interested in real estate I suppose?" He enquired in a voice that suggested hope and probable disappointment in equal degree.

"No," said Stephen. "That's out of my line altogether."

"That's a pity," said Mr. Doyle. "This place of mine is an absolute plum for anyone who takes the trouble to pick it up."

He felt that he would like to sell it on his own account. It would be one in the eye for Brentano when he came to take it over. But it was, Mr. Doyle realised, sadly improbable that anyone, even anyone to whom real estate was altogether out of his line, would pay a price sufficiently high to cover the mortgages.

"Then you don't feel like it?" he asked.

Stephen told him that that was what he had tried to imply.

"Let's call it off then," said Mr. Doyle magnanimously. "The shoemaker should stick to his last. I should probably have been a rich man at my age if I had done so." He paused. "How old would you say I was by the way?" Mr. Doyle sat back with the self-conscious smile with which a man in late middle age awaits a flattering and improbable guess.

Stephen looked at him. So far as he could tell he might have been any age. The hair which fringed his head in whitish wisps like smoke had long ceased to bear any resemblance to human hair. The eye was spale and watery; the neck yellow and creased as though Mr. Doyle had spent a great deal of his time peering at things round a corner. Stephen politely guessed forty-five.

"And if you were to add twenty-one on to that," said Mr.

Doyle, enjoying the full flavour of the compliment, "you would be about right. Actually I shall be sixty-seven next September." He paused and added, "On the eighth," as though he hoped Stephen would remember the occasion and give him a present.

"You've worn well," said Stephen. It was the only thing to say. "I've lived wisely," said Mr. Doyle, and Stephen was aware to his astonishment that Mr. Doyle had attempted a wink in the Brentano tradition. Evidently Mr. Doyle in prosperity was a very different creature from Mr. Doyle on the edge of insolvency.

"Brentano's different," Mr. Doyle continued. "Got the constitution of a horse. But he ought to take more care of himself, especially now that he's got Gratia to think of. I shall have to speak to him about it." Mr. Doyle looked sideways at Stephen's glass and saw that it was still half full. He looked straight in front at his own. It was empty. He smiled when he saw that Stephen realised the fact.

"Have this one on me," said Stephen. "Don't wait. I'm afraid I'm a slow drinker."

Mr. Doyle would not hear of it. He dismissed the suggestion with princely abandon. "Some other time," he said vaguely, "some other time. I asked you to come down. And this is my little party. Drink up yourself and have another."

The steward put Mr. Doyle's gin-and-it before him together with a pile of chits and a pencil. Mr. Doyle picked them up idly and flicked them with his finger-nail. Clearly he attached no importance to them. The steward handed him the pencil. Mr. Doyle ignored it. "That's all right," he said. "Mr. Brentano will look after these. He'll be down presently."

He propped the cardboard chits up one against the other and started to build a little house of cards out of them.

MR. BRENTANO and Gratia were sitting side by side on a seat on the boat deck. It was a lonely quarter of the ship. Only the most energetic and those wanting privacy went there. The seat stood back in the space between the tall banded funnel and the isolated cabin occupied by the ship's wireless operator. It was high. They seemed to be sitting on the top of a cliff. In front, and so far below that it seemed to curve upwards towards the horizon, lay the sea. It was purple and as smooth as though it had been oiled. A long ochreous smudge showed where a ship had passed. But any disturbance which might have been made had long since been obliterated in the calm of a Mediterranean afternoon. Everything was peaceful and subdued.

"After all," Mr. Brentano was saying, "he is your father, and you ought to be glad that I'm going to do a square deal by him. If I didn't, God knows who would."

"I know that," said Gratia. She had been crying, and kept on catching her breath as she spoke. "I think it's awfully generous of you."

"Cut the generous out of the picture. I'm getting something in return, aren't I?" He took Gratia's hand in his and gave it a little squeeze. Then he put his arm around her and pulled her up to him. "What's the matter, dear?" he asked. "Not worried about money, are you?"

Gratia shook her head. Mr. Brentano kissed her again. He always felt a little embarrassed and awkward when Gratia would not reply. She merely lay limp and submissive in his

arms; anyone seeing them might have thought that she had fainted. But there was, Mr. Brentano felt, a protest in the way in which she sat giving obediently, though reluctantly, what he asked of her and suggesting nothing. He resented it. He knew that if he removed his arm she would at once sit up again and smooth the dark surface of her hair where he had ruffled it. It would immediately be as if he had not existed.

"Yes," he said, in a low teasing voice, "unless I'm careful, I shall be falling in love with you." He clasped his arms more tightly round her. His fingers found the shape of her breasts. He let his hands rest there. Her breasts were small and firm. Everything about her was astonishingly different from all the other women Mr. Brentano had known.

He could feel her young body stiffen and harden when he allowed his hands to caress her through the woollen jersey that she was wearing. On previous occasions he had always found this a stirring moment for both of them. It did not fail to rouse him now.

"Do you know, Gratia," he said, bending so low that his breath was in her ear and her hair brushed his face, "there's one thing you've never given me at all. And that's a real nice kiss." He twisted her round so that her face was opposite his.

It was only when it was over and he looked down at her that he realised that she had held her breath the whole time. To punish her he kissed her again.

When he let her go she said nothing. She sat back and arranged her hair. She moved a little away from him. Except that her breathing was faster—he could see the rise and fall of her bosom pitifully revealed by the tight jersey she wore—she might have been sitting there upright, and alone, all the time.

Then he saw that her mouth was quivering and he was afraid she was going to cry. He wished now that he had not

attempted to kiss her like that, not yet at any rate. Her handkerchief was still a sodden lump from the little misunderstanding that had arisen earlier.

Gratia now cried easily and at little provocation. This was all the more surprising to Mr. Brentano, in view of her colossal self-control before. It seemed as though her reserve had suddenly snapped. Like a thin sheet of ice that had fractured it could now support nothing. Mr. Brentano acknowledged the fact that he would have to go slowly with Gratia for a bit.

He liked purity and all that in a woman. He had said as much to Mr. Doyle on several occasions: Mr. Doyle respected him for it. But he did like the girl to be a sport. That was all he asked, for the present at any rate. Simply that Gratia should be a sport. It was no good beating about the bush, either Gratia was going to be his wife or else she wasn't. Besides he wanted children. He regarded them as one of the most charming possessions that a woman properly loved can have. But not the sort of women he had hitherto been used to. They had mostly worked out their own individual damnations, childless if not unloved. And the other kind: the women with sun-scorched faces and bleached hair who followed their husbands about with the grim perseverance of devotion—their children were always at school in England and had to have seasonable Christmas letters posted somewhere about the last week of November. Mr. Brentano had never wanted children under those conditions.

But with Gratia it would be different. When he got his house in England things would be very comfortable for children. He had been looking through the copy of *Country Life* in the saloon and had turned down the corner of a page showing an attractive Tudor-style residence in park-like grounds in Sussex, which he intended to show Gratia later. Down in the country with every comfort Gratia would enjoy

having children. She could not fail to do so. He had heard that women who were a bit nervous about it at first usually made the best mothers later on.

He realised that he must say something to reassure her and put her at her ease. He pulled her to him again, not as a lover this time but gently in the manner of a father wanting to talk confidentially to a favourite daughter. "Listen, duckie," he said softly, "there's something I've been wanting to talk to you about for a long time. I didn't like to mention it before but there's no point in not saying it now."

Again he was aware that Gratia's body had become tense and hard in his arms. "It's the question of your clothes," he said. Gratia went limp again and Mr. Brentano resumed. "I don't mean to say there's anything actually wrong with what you've got on. I like that little jumper." For a moment Mr. Brentano forgot his good intentions and stroked the front of it lovingly with his hands. "I hope you'll always wear it when we're alone together, just the two of us. But you want something more grown up, more *beau monde*." French on Mr. Brentano's tongue took on a rich treacly quality lacking in the original. "You see, dearie, you can't go on dressing like a school-girl when you're Mrs. Hector Brentano."

Gratia was surprised. It hadn't occurred to her that there was anything wrong with her clothes. She simply hadn't thought about it. At the Convent she had had next to no clothes and had not minded. It was not an expensive convent and there were some girls who had far less. The Mother Superior indeed regarded new clothes with suspicion. She had taken pride in pointing out that the clothes she wore were twenty-two years old and though darned were still serviceable; and she had actually made one of the girls, a publican's daughter, return to her mother a pink tulle evening frock with short sleeves, which had been sent to her for her birthday.

After such an atmosphere the new clothes which Gratia had bought in London had seemed affluence to her. For the first time in her life she had known the luxury of opening a wardrobe door and seeing inside it more frocks than she could wear at once. Mr. Brentano's remarks puzzled her. "I'm sorry if you don't like what I've got," she said. "I wish you'd told me, because they're all new. Anyhow, I can't ask Daddy for any more just yet. It cost him an awful lot to get all these."

"Cost him?" Mr. Brentano began, and then stopped himself.

"Yes, he told me," said Gratia. "He was going to have a new white duck suit for himself, but he went without it so that I could have everything that I needed for the voyage. He said we'd see about other things when we got there."

"He did, did he?" said Mr. Brentano grimly. "And did he say where they were coming from?"

"We didn't discuss it," said Gratia simply.

"Well, candidly," said Mr. Brentano, "he can't afford it."

"Then I shall have to do without."

"That's just where you are wrong," explained Mr. Brentano with enthusiasm, "and that's where I come in. We're engaged to be married, and I want you to have the best of everything—the very best. As soon as you're Mrs. Hector Brentano"—he rolled the words on his tongue with relish and appreciation—"you'll have a dress allowance of your own. I don't mind anything within reason. If you're going to be Mrs. Brentano you'll have to dress the part, you know. Ascot dresses with floppy hats, ermine wraps for the evening, sables, everything a nice girl could want." Mr. Brentano gave her arm an affectionate squeeze.

"It's very good of you," she said.

"Get used to the idea," replied Mr. Brentano. "I'll give

you a new evening dress for a birthday present—something dashing.”

“I don’t think father would like it,” Gratia replied doubtfully.

“Forget about him,” said Mr. Brentano promptly. “It’s just you and me you’ve got to consider from now on. We’ll get it at Port Said. Ship usually coals there. Anything’s better than sight-seeing. Damn dirty place, Port Said. You don’t know anything about that sort of thing, thank God.” Mr. Brentano became protective for a moment. “But there’s a dress shop in the Splendide-Majestic there. We’ll fit you up with something.”

Gratia thanked him gravely and without pleasure. But what he had said about her clothes had begun to worry her. She was a woman and she did not like to be told that there was something wrong with her appearance.

She wondered how long it would be before she would be able to tell Mr. Brentano that she did not like his bright check suit and his tiepin carved out of an opal in the shape of a skull. She did not know anything about men’s clothes. She merely wished that her father were a little tidier and cleaner and that Mr. Brentano were not quite so prosperous and padded looking. He looked like a well-fed red-faced seal. Every little bit of him was smooth and well covered. He was evidently a man who had found the ideal diet early in life and stuck to it throughout. His history was clearly a history of good meals and more than enough to drink.

He let his hand rest in open friendly fashion on her knee. She shuddered.

THEY reached Port Said at noon. They came on it quite suddenly. The town rose up abruptly out of the surrounding country like a pile of bricks on a nursery floor. A shimmering point danced on the horizon. It was the Port Administration Lighthouse. Away from it stretched a gloomy coastline of low flattened sandhills. Nothing seemed to grow there. It was as lifeless as if it had been cursed. It might have been part of the landscape in the moon. Civilisation evidently stopped abruptly in Alexandria, which lay somewhere to the west, resplendent with its new taxicabs and smart jewellers' shops and luxury hotels. Here there was nothing. So far inland as Gratia could see through the haze there was merely sandy desolation. Then Captain Curly came along and pointed out the colour of the sea to her. It was no longer a deep, overpowering purple. It was grey; grey as the Thames at Westminster. That, explained the Captain, was due to the great volume of sand and silt that the Nile brings down. The most remarkable of all rivers, he told her, was the Amazon. It was really a great inland sea flowing steadily out towards the ocean, so great that the water miles and miles from its mouth was still fresh and not salt.

They came upon a massive jetty of sculptured stone. It was huge and solid. Its stone and mortar were aggressively foreign in this world of sand and mud. It might have been the work of benevolent giants. Behind it lay the harbour. Shipping rested there in a dense mass of masts and funnels. Gratia thought it the finest breakwater she had ever seen. The wind

was blowing freshly, and over the groyne the waves were breaking like lace.

The town announced itself with a mounting chorus of tumultuous advertisements and the white glare of bathing-huts. Advertisements bearing the message "whisky" in its various proprietorial forms proclaimed the presence of the indefatigable Englishman struggling manfully against adversity in a hot and thirsty world. Cigarette manufacturers tried to shout down the distillers. Everything was sharp and strident; even the buildings were striped like pyjamas. It was apparent that the hand of Western civilisation had not rested lightly on this outpost of the East.

A strong hand descended on Gratia's shoulder. "Been looking everywhere for you," said Mr. Brentano. He gave her a little hug. "Ready to come ashore?" he asked. "We've got to get you a birthday present."

Gratia nodded. That hour away from Mr. Brentano, away from her father had been pleasant. She went down into her cabin to get ready.

When she came up on deck her father was talking to Mr. Brentano. Even Gratia noticed the difference in his attitude. "You old rogue," he was saying, "wanting to get away with my little girl like that." He dug Mr. Brentano in the ribs, so hard that he forced a grunt out of him. "I know you. I've got my eye on you."

Mr. Brentano looked at him curiously, amazement and disgust mingling. Mr. Doyle took advantage of the pause; he could never before remember an occasion when he had succeeded in stumping Mr. Brentano. He was enjoying himself. "Ah," he said, grinning knowingly into Mr. Brentano's face. "Got you on the raw there. I know you. Young men in love." He wagged his finger at Mr. Brentano. "You'll be planning some mischief, I'll be bound."

Another nudge, hard and unexpected, together with the arrival of Gratia, prevented Mr. Brentano's reply.

Mr. Doyle removed an invisible piece of cotton from Mr. Brentano's coat and stood back to survey him. "You two look ready to have your photo taken," he said. "Mind they don't mistake you for brother and sister." He tittered delightedly at his little joke; it was another dig at Brentano. It was the sort of thing he had been wanting to get in for years. As neither Mr. Brentano nor Gratia smiled at it he did not press the point. He went down to his cabin.

It was a scramble, but he just managed to go ashore with them. He almost fell down on to the floating pontoon in his efforts not to be late. The discomfiture of Mr. Brentano when he saw him was obvious. Mr. Doyle remarked loudly and cheerfully over the head of the lady who had heard the scream, "All right, all right, don't get nervous. I'm not going to play gooseberry. You've got the afternoon to yourselves." The lady who had heard the scream smiled fondly at Gratia; she had been engaged herself once.

Mr. Doyle walked behind smiling and swaying in time with the motion of the pontoon. He liked these little trips ashore, and he could not remember one when he had had more money to spend. There was a thick wad of notes bulging his breast pocket. He could feel it every time he took a deep breath.

From the moment they got ashore Mr. Brentano was a man apart. He took command of the situation immediately. It was as though the quayside were under martial law and Mr. Brentano had been appointed the military governor. He settled the little bother that arose when an Egyptian vendor pointed out—as was perfectly true—that Mr. Doyle was trying to get away without paying. He even arbitrarily decided the rate of exchange between the Egyptian pound and the

French franc and with frequent reference to "Cook & Son," which were the only words which the vendors really understood, refused to allow further discussion. He routed the army of guides who appeared to have been waiting from the days of the Arabian Nights for the arrival of the *Tusitala*: they understood that kind of treatment and promptly behaved towards him as though he were a visiting prince. Mr. Brentano did not disillusion them.

Mr. Doyle hailed a bright yellow taxi and drove off. He waved to his party over the back and blew kisses until the vehicle was out of sight. It startled Gratia to think that her father should know the name of anywhere in Port Said well enough to want to be driven there. It was a secret and rather sinister side of his life.

Mr. Brentano put Gratia into a taxi the size of a private car. The chauffeur treated Mr. Brentano as though he knew him. The Hotel Splendide-Majestic stood some distance from the Shâri 'es Sultân Husein where they had landed. It was new and angular. It glittered with chromium and glass. A vast fan, like an aeroplane propeller, revolved from the ceiling. The whole place was like a casino. Mr. Brentano handed his white-bound Stetson hat to the coloured pageboy and said something that made the boy laugh. He was perfectly at home. "We'll be in and out of plenty of places like this together," he promised Gratia. "Don't you forget, little girl, you're only just beginning to enjoy yourself."

The dress salon in the hotel was kept by a French Jewess. A friendliness seemed to spring up naturally between her and Mr. Brentano. She was clearly enchanted by him, and he was affability itself. Only Gratia was left somehow out of it all.

The modiste, however, made it her business to please Gratia. She had at once appreciated the relationship that

existed between the lady and the gentleman; there could be only one explanation when a man of Mr. Brentano's age and temperament came to buy dresses for a girl of Gratia's age and appearance.

Mr. Brentano dismissed two girlish dresses of pale satin with a wave of the hand, and finally became enthusiastic over a dress of gold sequins. It was cut low, back and front. The French Jewess smilingly indicated where it would come on her own bosom. It was unbelievable. Mr. Brentano became still more enthusiastic about it, and strongly urged Gratia to have it. The modiste smilingly assured Gratia that she could never be more charmingly suited. Her smile was a polite insinuation of evil.

Mr. Brentano sat reading the advertisements in the ladies' journals while Gratia changed in the little satinwood cubicle. He enjoyed the advertisements and wondered what became of all those good-looking girls who posed, sometimes in dresses, sometimes without. He supposed someone was lucky; they didn't look the sort of girls who would let themselves be wasted.

The modiste reappeared *très agitée*. Madame, she explained, had not the right lingerie. What she had was—the modiste searched for the word that meant clumsy, unsuitable and altogether unworthy—English. Should she get others for Madame that were in accord with her dress? Mr. Brentano cordially agreed.

When Gratia appeared she seemed to be wearing nothing but gold sequins. She looked so pretty that he kissed her on the spot. The French Jewess smiled delightedly. She always liked that sort of thing to happen. She took it as a compliment to the design of her frocks.

The bill came when they were finishing their tea. Just for the fun of the thing he showed it to Gratia. He knew that if he didn't she would never guess half the price. It shocked

Gratia profoundly. Mr. Brentano squeezed her knee with his leg.

"That's O.K.," he said simply. "I've been saving up for this."

They got back to the ship in comfortable time. Mr. Doyle had not yet returned. An hour later he was the only passenger still ashore. At six-thirty the Captain was talking of sailing without him. At seven a police search-party was mentioned. At seven-thirty he was seen, being supported by two Egyptian boatmen, in the back of a small craft. As the boat drew near he suddenly pushed the two Egyptians aside and stood up to wave to the *Tusitala*. The Egyptians caught him before he had hurt himself.

After some difficulty they got him on deck and put him in a deck chair. Mr. Brentano paid off the bodyguard. Mr. Doyle smelt strongly of anisette. His right hand was scratched and bleeding and his trouser knees showed that he must have fallen somewhere dusty. He offered no explanation.

"Damn dirty place, Port Said," was all he said. "Disgustin'. You wouldn't believe some of the things they do. Like animals. The British ought to stop it. Get a few decent fellows together and swoop down and smash the whole outfit up. It's a bloody disgrace."

Five minutes later he was fast asleep.

THEY SAILED from Port Said as soon as the disturbance created by the arrival of Mr. Doyle had died down. There was a certain air of hurry and constraint about the whole proceeding. Mr. Doyle was definitely in disgrace. When he woke up, Gratia got him down to his cabin. He did not appear again that night.

By the time they reached the first of the Canal stations it was moonlight. Gratia, who was used to English moonlight, was dazzled by it. The moon seemed to have fallen halfway down the heavens and been caught again. It was not merely an object in the sky; it was the sky itself. A whole quarter was filled by it. It blotted out the stars like a lighthouse among candles. It was vast. It was scenic. It was vulgar. It was overloaded with romance and enchantment. But it was Egyptian.

Mr. Brentano would not hear of their going to bed. He got another cushion, put his arm round Gratia, and the two of them sat watching the night.

The honeymoon couple walked up and down the deck with their arms round each other's waist. They seemed to move about in a world of happiness of their own. Mr. Brentano looked after them fondly. Other couples appeared mysteriously and hid themselves out of sight.

The air was warm and astonishingly still. It seemed thick and heavy as though the hand could touch it. Perfume hung about suspended in the atmosphere for minutes after a woman had passed. It was a night when people fell in love at sight.

Stephen lit a cigarette and found a seat that was unoccupied.

Others sought it afterwards but no one attempted to share it. The moon made normal night-time privacy impossible.

The *Tusitala*, which at sea had seemed so small and inadequate, now seemed enormous again. It towered above the silver waters casting a fantastic black shadow. Its shadow was so big that it spread beyond the water and crept up the embankment beyond. It was as though two vessels, one solid and throbbing, the other incorporeal and silent, were passing together down the clear street of water. Big as the ship seemed, however, it did not rise above the embankment. And when the Canal was really a canal and not merely a path across a lake, the eyes of the watchers on board were often on the level of the ground, the sandy ground that stretched away from this neat man-made commercial cleft and became metamorphosed before them into savage, uninhabitable desert.

Here and there were mounds. They threw long violet shadows. Once they passed a hut with a pale daffodil-coloured light burning in the window. But for the most part they advanced like a ship in a dream, gently placidly drifting through this world of sand and crumbled cities.

Arriving at Ismailia was like coming upon a pillar-box set up in the jungle. It was a declaration of progress in a country which commemorates Time. The headquarters of the Suez Canal Company were there; the squares and gardens attested to the prosperity of the place. An engine was shunting busily as the *Tusitala* went by in the night. It seemed an unusually clumsy and blundering little engine. The noise of its operations followed them long after they had passed.

The lake opened before them like a city square seen down a long avenue. They disturbed flocks of sleeping waterfowl. Pelicans, white as clothes on a line, rose and circled round the ship to hit the water again with the noise of rocks falling, and remained bobbing in their wake. Little silver herons found

fresh resting places. And scarlet flamingoes with black-tipped wings took to the air in hundreds, blotting out the moon in their flight, and joined the armies of their kind that stood sleeping far from the *Tusitala's* path. Mr. Brentano suggested sitting up all night.

Considering his opportunities he behaved himself remarkably well. Possibly it was the cathartic effect of the moonlight. It made even Mr. Brentano romantic and assuaged the devil that lurked within. Or it may have been the dinner. He had drunk the greater part of a bottle of white port and was in the lethargic state when holding hands is immensely satisfying. It may also have been that he had grave doubts as to how Gratia would take it if he attempted any liberties. Mr. Brentano, the hero of a hundred love affairs, sat back with a rug across his knees and marvelled at himself. Sublimation, he reflected, was a wonderful and mysterious thing.

The *Tusitala* pressed on slowly and silently. They glided placidly on between low sandhills. The moonlight was so bright that the sand itself seemed to be burning with a cold subterranean incandescence. This heatless fire cast a purifying glow over everything.

Whenever Gratia momentarily dozed off, Mr. Brentano roused her with an affectionate squeeze of the hand into appreciation. Captain Curly took a look at them in his bed-time stroll. They were just like every other pair of lovers he had ever seen.

The effects of the white port were beginning to wear off. Mr. Brentano felt more himself again. He took stock of the situation. It was, he realised without vanity, the kind of situation which he knew how to handle to perfection. He drew Gratia to him and gave her a long loving kiss before she was fully awake to the change in her companion. "We're good friends aren't we, little girl?" he enquired tenderly.

Such an opening, he hoped, would give Gratia an opportunity to prove that she was a sport after all. What he wanted was a little warmth and loving kindness. It would have been nice if Gratia had suggested earlier that they should slip down to her cabin for a bit. But he realised that she would as soon think of suggesting that they should go to the moon together. It was simply that Gratia did not understand that in similar circumstances any other woman would have done as much without hesitation.

"Going to gimme a kiss?" he asked.

At the suggestion Gratia jerked her head away so suddenly that she hit Mr. Brentano in the mouth. He grunted. It was all a part of this silly jumpy attitude towards him that he deplored, this behaving as though he were some sort of animal that was not to be trusted.

"All right then," he said. "Don't."

"I'm sorry," she said. "I . . ." Without waiting to finish the sentence, she got up suddenly and left him. She almost ran.

"Little girl," he called after her. But she did not answer. He called again. There was no answer.

Mr. Brentano put his hand to his mouth. It was tickling as if a fly were walking there. To his surprise his hand came away red. She must have cut his lip when she jerked her face away from him. He mopped his lip with his handkerchief and surveyed the strawberry marks that now dappled it.

"My God," he said to himself. "What a bloody birthday party it's going to be. Doyle tight, and Gratia not speaking to me. That's what I call a real jolly evening. I shall be able to have a nice long talk with the Captain and then we'll all go to bed at ten o'clock."

He spat overboard because it relieved his feelings. Then he got up and began to saunter about the deck. It was lonely without Gratia. It was cold, too, now that he had not got the

rug over him. The moonlight seemed harsh and unfriendly. Because he was in love with Gratia he began to make excuses for her; that she was overtired, that she was not fully recovered, that her father had been worrying her again. But never that she really did not want to kiss him.

Mr. Brentano walked forward and stood looking out. They were approaching another lake. It was spread out like a great silver plain in front of them, the outer rim invisible among the sandhills. Their track across the middle of it was marked by the dark heads of half submerged stakes. The *Tusitala* advanced cautiously and silently as though they were marauding.

Next morning, they were still in the Canal, proceeding gently and unhurriedly from the Bitter Lakes towards Suez. Other captains of Captain Curly's acquaintance disliked this slow passage through the Canal. They resented having to behave for hours on end as though they were about to enter dry dock. Captain Curly suffered none of these discontents. If the walls of the Canal were not strong enough to resist the wash of a big ship travelling at speed, then he would have to travel slowly; that was all there was to it: as it was impossible to alter the size of the ship, he could see nothing else for it short of rebuilding the Canal; and that was beside the point. In any case it was all in the pilot's hands. Captain Curly was merely a passenger on his own ship. But far exceeding all else, the canal was safe. It was as safe and comfortable as a swimming-bath. What he had always resented were the dues that ships had to pay. A toll gate on the high seas was something that offended his sailor's nature.

At the moment he was not thinking about his business of navigation so much as about the cocktail party to which he had been invited. There was only one drawback to what looked otherwise as though it might be a delightful evening.

The drawback was Dr. Jarvis. When Captain Curly heard Mr. Brentano say that he had invited the doctor he could hardly believe his ears. The Captain found no pleasure in sitting down to table with people who wore their clothes as though they slept in them. Mr. Doyle, without Dr. Jarvis to help him, was quite enough to wreck the appearance of any party.

But as it would have been anguish for the Captain to know that something interesting at which he was not assisting was actually taking place on board his ship, he accepted. Mr. Brentano had made Gratia send out the invitations herself. The Captain wrote her a reply in his own hand.

The reply was formal and in the third person.

TAKEN ALTOGETHER it was a worrying day. Little things went wrong. Mr. Brentano was given a pair of brown shoes that he had never seen before, and the Captain's man made his master's tea with water that was far from boiling. The heat was the real culprit. Things always tended to get slack as soon as the temperature began to rise. Even the white suits of the stewards did little to counteract it.

Mr. Doyle frankly admitted himself beaten by the weather. He just rang for another pot of coffee. Then he removed the jacket of his pyjamas and lay quietly on his back letting the fan play upon him. He was just a little ashamed about the episode at Port Said. He could not imagine what had made him go to such a place. He had thought himself past that kind of thing and it was really rather disturbing to find that he was not. Not that he had actually done anything disgraceful. So

far as he could remember—which was not at all clearly—he had behaved throughout exactly as a father of a girl just about to get married should behave, when he finds out that he has unaware wandered into a den of vice.

He dismissed the picture of Port Said from his mind and began to think about his speech for the evening. It had been a happy idea of his to make a little impromptu speech. He had always had a neat turn of phrase. He had frequently thought that he ought to have made his living as a writer. With a good secretary to manage things for him he might have got almost anywhere. But on the *Tusitala* there was no secretary. He was forced to do everything himself. At last he found a stump of pencil and the back of an envelope and sat there ready to write. Curiously enough, natural creative artist that he was, nothing came. After five minutes still nothing had come. He put down the pencil and switched on the fan to full.

Suez had been left three hours when evening fell on the *Tusitala*. The afternoon had been threatening. The lady who had heard the scream darkly prophesied thunder. The air was heavy like the air in an old church.

Gratia and Mr. Brentano sat in the shade of the promenade deck. Mr. Brentano dozed with a bandana handkerchief spread over his face. The top button of his flannel trousers was undone, and the mauve shirt showed brightly through. From time to time he would wake up sufficiently to lean over and stroke Gratia's arm. The perspiration poured steadily from his forehead.

Mr. Doyle remained in his cabin. He sent the steward to get him a bottle of whisky. It was a little extravagance that he had not felt able to allow himself earlier. Now happily it didn't matter. He signed for it cheerfully and without a thought. Mr. Brentano would hardly want his own father-in-law to go short of the smaller comforts of life.

Nor was the whisky without effect. Somehow it counteracted the debilitating effects of the hot weather. Mr. Doyle now felt absolutely in top form. His usually ashen cheeks had a fresh and boyish bloom. He dressed that evening light-heartedly, humming little snatches of song to himself as he did so. When he came to look at his black tie, however, he decided that it would hardly do. It was like a thick, frayed bootlace. He threw it into the wastepaper basket, and rang for the steward.

"Just cut along to Mr. Brentano's cabin with my compliments," he said, "and say that I should be obliged if he could lend me a black tie. If he asks why, say that you spoilt mine pressing it for me."

When he finally emerged from his cabin, Mr. Doyle was just comfortably above himself. Before he had taken his last drink he had told himself that he must go carefully for the rest of the evening. Now he didn't mind how many more he had. He was out to enjoy himself and he wanted everyone else to do the same. He felt like crying, he was so happy.

They had champagne cocktails to begin with. Gratia refused hers. But Mr. Brentano and her father begged her to try it. She drank only half of it and complained that it made her eyes feel funny. This amused Mr. Brentano. "We know the feeling, don't we, Doyle?" he said with a wink.

Mr. Doyle thought of a cutting reply, but by the time it had come to him they were talking about something else. He felt strange. He was somehow out of the conversation as though it were all taking place on the other side of a thick sheet of plate glass. He noticed, too, how silent Stephen was. He was looking at Mr. Brentano as though he would like to kill him. Mr. Doyle smiled at his foolish imagination. But the look on Stephen's face remained.

It was Mr. Brentano who did most of the talking. The Captain nodded politely at everything he said and took stock

of Mr. Doyle out of the corner of his eye. Something seemed to have happened to him. He was sitting crumpled up in his chair. He looked wretched and miserable. Whenever he saw anyone looking at him he smiled valiantly.

Considering it was a birthday party, it was not a particularly gay one. Gratia sat beside Mr. Brentano, silent and resigned. She was wearing the gold sequin dress. Mr. Brentano regarded it with approval; he could not remember any evening dress since the days of his boyhood which had revealed so much of the bosom. Not that Gratia really had any figure at all. The boyishness of her whole body had frequently amazed him.

Stephen could scarcely bear to look at her. She was so near to him now. But in a fortnight she would be gone, as elusive and irrecoverable as a figure in a dream. Once he caught her glance. For a moment they stared at each other as strangers. Then she smiled. It was the only time he saw a smile on her face that evening.

Mr. Brentano intercepted the smile and took it for himself. "Cheering up, little lady?" he asked.

Gratia nodded, "Yes, thank you, Mr. Brentano," she said. . .

Mr. Brentano threw back his head and shouted with laughter. "Did you hear that?" he enquired. He turned to Gratia: "Don't you forget, little girlie, that you've got to call me Hector now."

Gratia's reply was interrupted by her father. He joined the conversation with the suddenness of a man dropped from the clouds. "You're quite right, Gratia," he said, banging with his fist to accentuate his vehemence. "It's damn' ridiculous to be expected to call him Mr. Brentano simply because I owe him money. Call him Hector, just as you would any other man."

Mr. Brentano leant across the table towards Mr. Doyle. He was about to speak.

"It's no use trying to explain it away," Mr. Doyle continued, with a sweep of the arm that cleared the tops of the glasses by a fraction. "You're all out of date. Behind the times. Dead long ago. Of course she's got to call you Hector."

"Well, that's what I told her to do, isn't it?" Mr. Brentano said, raising his voice angrily.

"I don't know. Is it?" Mr. Doyle replied vaguely. "You must count me out of this conversation. My head's bad. It's the motion of the boat." He passed his hand feebly across his forehead. His retreat from the conversation was as sudden and inexplicable as the manner in which he had entered it.

Mr. Brentano did not allow the incident to interfere with the evening's gaiety. Instead he nodded knowingly across at Stephen and winked at the Captain. In particular he gave Gratia's hand a loving squeeze. His large reddish fingers completely obscured hers, as he reassured her affectionately that so far as he was concerned her father's conduct was already forgotten. He toasted Gratia politely and ceremonially, rising to do so. "To the future Mrs. Hector Brentano," he said, "and to all the little Brentanos."

"Hear, hear," exclaimed Mr. Doyle. He raised his glass to his lips: it was empty.

"And now," said Mr. Brentano, "because it happens to be a birthday party perhaps you'll excuse me, gentlemen, if I make a little presentation." He pulled a small leather case out of his pocket and handed it to Gratia. "It's nothing really," he said, with transparent indifference. "Just a little memento."

"Hear, hear," said Mr. Doyle, and rapped on the table. He felt in the mood for speeches. He was saving his own up like an offering.

Gratia hesitated so long in opening the case that Mr.

Brentano opened it for her. He was charmed by her hesitation. It was part of the childishness about her that he obviously adored. "Go on, dearie," he said, nudging her encouragingly. "It's yours, isn't it?"

Mr. Doyle was impatient for the speeches to continue; but even he had to admit that the present was magnificent. When opened, the case revealed a string of pearls. They were more than ordinary pearls; they were like jewels out of the Arabian Nights. He gave a gasp of sheer happiness when he recollected that they were real. He wanted to handle them, and bent across the table to get them. But Mr. Brentano prevented him.

"For the lady," he said simply.

When Gratia showed no readiness to wear them, Mr. Brentano put them on her himself. "Got to wear 'em now you've got 'em," he said. "They go off if you don't. It's the heat of the body they need and the fat. Lots of fat in the human system. Comes out through the pores. Take care of them. Always get your money back on them, you could. Decent things keep their value. They look fine, don't they?" He leant back and surveyed the effect.

Mr. Doyle, to the surprise of Dr. Jarvis who had been observing him with an understanding and expert eye, managed to rise to his feet. He supported himself with both hands on the table and cleared his throat noisily. His moment had come.

"Captain Curly, Dr. Jarvis, Mr. Mac . . . Mac . . ." He avoided the awkward name and passed on. "Hector and Gratia dear. It gives a very unworthy man a very deep sense of pleasure to stand here to-night. How unworthy I am only I can judge. . . ."

"Sit down," said Mr. Brentano.

"I know you despise me," replied Mr. Doyle with feeling,

"but I am not here to-night to justify myself in the eyes of the world." He paused, and looked round the saloon. The other passengers had left. "I am here," he continued, raising his voice to drown Mr. Brentano's, "because I wish these two young people, Hector and Gratia, the happiest of voyages across the sea of life."

"Sit down," said Mr. Brentano, louder this time.

"They may think now," he said, "that life is just a bed of roses. It isn't." Mr. Doyle said this emphatically with the air of a man who knew. "It bloody well is not. You have to take the rough with the smooth and there's a hell of a lot of the rough."

"Ask him to sit, please," said Gratia to Stephen.

"Marriage is all right if you remember one thing, and that's the time. There's been more human unhappiness caused by not remembering the time—late for meals and that sort of thing," continued Mr. Doyle reminiscently, "—than by poverty, unfaithfulness—or drink. I've known homes, whole homes, wrecked, because a man has come in a couple of hours late for dinner."

Mr. Doyle's voice had dropped to an indistinct mumble of discontent. He realised that his speech was not developing along the grand lines he had intended, and he raised his voice to shouting pitch without warning as though he were addressing a meeting. "And now," he proclaimed, "I have much pleasure in wishing the bride-to-be all the best; and her husband. He's a lucky man, a very lucky man. Her mother was just the same. A saint. I married her. She died. Gratia's a girl in a thousand. It's going to be a terrible break for me, I don't deny it. She's been at my side so long that I've grown to lean on her. We've been together through fair weather and foul. I don't know that I shall survive the parting. I'm not a young man. I'm not so strong as I was. I shan't be with you for

very long." Mr. Doyle's voice dropped again and became choked in sobs. He collapsed forward on to the table.

Mr. Brentano did not move. His face was flushed a deeper purple. He ran his finger round the inside of his collar. Stephen and Dr. Jarvis pulled Mr. Doyle back on to his chair and helped him from the room. His feet trailed behind him like a rag doll's.

Dr. Jarvis looked at Stephen over the top of Mr. Doyle's head. "Just as well the young lady is getting married," he remarked. "This sort of thing isn't nice for a girl."

They left Mr. Doyle in the cabin. He did not struggle. Indeed he seemed very grateful to them; he kept smiling and trying to shake hands. His grief about himself had evaporated. When they had closed the door they paused to hear if he was all right. He was. He was singing.

IT GREW STEADILY HOTTER; a damp, overpowering, remorseless heat. It was as though the wind that blew across the *Tusitala's* decks had been warmed on a brazier. The sun was no longer merely an illuminant. It blazed with a personal and individual ferocity. Stephen began to understand the spirit in which the mind of man had conceived the Sun God. He tried to find shelter. But there was none. The architect who had designed the ship in the grey Tyneside shipyards had evidently not thought of the possibility of the sun. At midday the whole ship was merely a hot, shadowless street of wood and steel creeping across an infinite, glittering ocean. The iron-work became so hot that it blistered the naked hand. Gaps and

crevices appeared in the deck planking. The Lascars ran about with faces the colour of chestnuts.

Stephen did not go near Gratia. He had decided that to keep away was the only thing. He tried to remain in his cabin working. But the cabin quickly resolved itself into a small airless oven. His hand became so damp that the pencil slipped up and down in it. The fan, for all its rattling and little furies of energy, merely served to stir up the hot air and throw it in gusts in Stephen's face. He took his books up into the saloon and tried to work there. If not actually cooler it was at least fresher. It smelt merely like a hot day in a crowd; not like a morning in a sick-room.

He spread his papers around him and began to go over them carefully. His trousers felt tight and clammy about the knees. His shirt was sticking to his chest like a plaster. With a jerk he pulled himself up. For a moment he had nodded.

He wondered pityingly if some of Mr. Doyle's indolence might not perhaps be due to the weather. With the mercury in the thermometer standing nearly as high as the makers had seen fit to make allowance for it, it was no climate for working. But the papers on the table in front of him were a protection, an excuse, in case Mr. Brentano or his future father-in-law should try to draw Stephen back into the party.

Mr. Brentano was perfectly content to be left alone, however. It was pleasant to sit beside Gratia, enjoying the peculiar fragrance of girlhood. It seemed the long-promised reward for a good life. He called her his "little slave girl," and said that as soon as they got to Penang he would buy her a pair of heavy gold bangles. The whole notion of Gratia's slavery seemed to appeal to him enormously. He referred to it frequently.

Stephen's resolve not to see Gratia grew steadily harder to keep. For her sake as well as for his own he avoided her on all

occasions, never going near her when he could help it. Even Mr. Doyle noticed it; he was afraid perhaps that the incident of the speech might have affected their relationship. His memory of the birthday party was a little clouded; he trusted devoutly that nothing unseemly had happened.

Stephen's resolution did him no good, however. A new fact presented itself; he needed to see Gratia. There was an urgently increasing necessity for the sight of her that would have to be satisfied. That night he could bear it no longer. He pushed his chair back and went on deck. He wanted air and the sense of space. He felt cramped. It was late. The stars burned with a clear lamplike lustre. Here and there the brightest, the planets, were reflected in the water like submarine fireworks. The ship moved across the calm sea as gently as a ship in a picture. The air was very still; so still that the ear seemed to be on the alert listening for something.

At the top of the companionway he paused. The whole ship now seemed desirable. He went up on to the boat deck. Standing there alone was Gratia. Afterwards, it seemed that he had never really doubted that she would be there.

"Gratia Doyle," he said, going up to her. "I want to talk to you. I want to help you."

"How can you help me, now?" she asked. Her voice was so low that he could hardly hear her.

"I can. I know I can," he told her. "You mustn't do it. You mustn't marry Brentano. You mustn't, I say. You mustn't."

"Mustn't marry Brentano." Gratia repeated the words slowly as though they were a spell. "I don't understand."

He suddenly came up close to her, so close that he could see that she had been crying. "Yes, you do," he said. "You do understand. Of course you understand. You're not going to marry him. You can't. It'll kill you. You can't bear him. I've

seen it. You're different. Utterly different. It's no use thinking about it. If you don't stop it, I will."

He took her in his arms and held her. She made no resistance. She lay there quite willingly. He kissed her timidly, at first, on her hair, then on her cheek and on her lips. She clung to him as though she were afraid that someone would come to separate them.

"Oh, what am I going to do?" she asked over again and again.

"Tell me what can I do."

"You're going to marry me," said Stephen.

She did not reply for a moment. When she spoke it was with unexpected violence. "What's the good of talking like that?" she asked. "Can't you see that it only makes things harder. I've got to marry him. I've got to. That's all there is to it. I've told you how it is. Oh, why can't you leave me alone?"

For answer Stephen tried to kiss her again, but she pushed him roughly from her.

"We can't do this," she said. "I tell you we can't. It's all too late. You've got no right to say these things. It only makes it so much worse for me. You've got to let me go now before you say anything more."

He saw the oval of her face, set hard and even paler than before and he knew that she was in earnest. "Gratia," he said, "you must, you must marry me. Can't you understand? I love you. I've loved you ever since I saw you. I can't go on living unless you say you'll marry me. If you don't marry me, I'll never marry anyone ever."

This time she did not attempt to thrust him away. They clung to each other. Stephen held her frantically in his arms as though he feared that all the forces of Nature would immediately conspire to hurl them apart. Time seemed to be slipping past like a river in flood. It swirled through them threatening

to sweep them away. They braced themselves against it. Like all lovers they were fugitives from the morrow, terrified lest they should be caught up. Their one wish was that the moment should last.

"You must marry me," Stephen kept repeating mechanically. "You must. I can't live without you. You must marry me."

But a change had come over Gratia. It was subtle and delicate. She was still in his arms and her body still close to his. But she was no longer the frightened girl that he had found standing there alone on the deck. She had grown stronger. She stood there, passive and remote. With one hand she was stroking his forehead, pushing back gently the hairs that fell across it; the other she tried to put over his mouth to silence him.

"You mustn't do this," she said, speaking very tenderly as though he were a child. "It's no use saying these things. Nothing can make it happen now. It's awful for both of us. But we shall forget all about it in time. We shall have to forget."

He pulled her hand away and kissed it. "I shall never forget," he said, "never."

She smiled at him. It seemed that she was very wise in love and he very simple. "Oh, yes you will," she told him. "Nothing can possibly last for ever. You'll get out there and find the College and everything waiting for you. You'll forget about me. This will all heal up. In six months' time it will be just a memory. In a couple of years you won't be able to remember even what I look like."

He recalled those minutes on the deck with Gratia—and they could not have been more than ten in all—as he lay in his berth afterwards. Beauty had been shown to him for an instant and in the same moment taken from him. The desperation of

the whole meeting had fused everything into a single impression in his mind. He could not believe now that he had even protested against his fate. He felt that if only the roll of Time could wind backwards for a space he could set his love in words that could not have been denied. But it was too late. He knew that he had spoken at the time, spoken as he could not have believed he could speak. But it had been no use.

He saw it all. She had been very quiet, very still the whole time. It might have been another pair of lovers of whom she was speaking. "You must forget all about me," she had said. "Try not to think of me at all, ever. You must not say that it would have been better that we had never met. We have had this. No one can ever take this away from us." As she had said this her eyes had filled with tears. They ran down her cheeks. He had felt them wet on his own. "Promise me absolutely," Gratia had said, "that you'll never try to see me again." And then before he could speak Gratia had left him.

In her black dress she had faded abruptly into the darkness. It was the same colour as the sea behind her. It absorbed her. The bright light of the moon and innumerable stars had gleamed in her hair. Stephen had watched her until she had gone. When he had realised she was not coming back he had felt suddenly cold. He had shivered. This world was reasserting itself.

A few minutes later he had gone down from the boat deck. In the alcove of one of the promenade seats the butt of a cigar had burned red and glowed like a comet. The butt had moved a fiery arc in the air. Mr. Doyle's voice had come from behind it.

"Enjoying yourself?" he had asked.

"I'M SORRY," said Mr. Doyle, "that you should take that kind of view of it. Frankly, Hector, I'd expected something more generous. Something . . . bigger. Something. . . ."—he described a huge circle in the air with his two hands indicative of the magnitude of the generosity he had anticipated, and left the rest of the sentence expressively unfinished.

Mr. Brentano made a considerable play of lighting his cigar which had gone out, and did not reply.

"I wasn't to know," Mr. Doyle continued, "that I'd have my pocket picked. It was that liqueur. They must have doctored it up. Doctored it up with something dirty. It carried me off just like chloroform. Sort of thing an Egyptian would do. And mind you they're the gentry the British Tax Payer was expected to support after the war. You know, Hector, I've never had my pocket picked before."

"If you had, they wouldn't have got much until you met me," Mr. Brentano replied.

"Please, please," said Mr. Doyle hurriedly. "Don't let us lose our sense of dignity. Let us discuss this like gentlemen. You don't imagine that I like coming to you and admitting that I've been careless enough to lose something that you've just given me."

Mr. Brentano spat instead of replying.

"Not that I regard that hundred pounds in any real sense as a gift," Mr. Doyle pointed out; he resented Mr. Brentano's manners. "It's perfectly obvious that if you marry my daughter the hotel's still in the family. I'll make it over to you; and if

you want to control it, I'll make it over to you so you can pay the price I ask in instalments, so much a month. You know you may find it easier that way."

"Nothing doing," replied Mr. Brentano.

"I don't think, Hector," said Mr. Doyle very suavely and persuasively, "that you can really have pictured just how things are. Now that the money's gone I'm cleaned out again. It won't be very nice to have your own father-in-law going about Penang on his uppers."

"That's your affair," replied Mr. Brentano. "Gratia and me will be in England."

"And do you really think," said Mr. Doyle, drawing his lips back from his sharp yellow teeth, "that Gratia would ever agree to go back to England and leave me out there?"

"I do," said Mr. Brentano shortly.

"Then you've given yourself away very badly," replied Mr. Doyle. "I know there's precious little gratitude anywhere in this world. But, by God, I'm bound to say this makes me think twice before I can finally give my consent to this marriage."

"Give your consent," repeated Mr. Brentano contemptuously.

"That's what I said," answered Mr. Doyle.

"Have you forgotten my solicitors?" enquired Mr. Brentano.

"Have you forgotten Gratia?" asked Mr. Doyle. "You seem to have been liking her company quite a lot lately. I got the impression the last few days that she was being nicer to you in lots of little ways. I had thought of speaking to her about it. I don't like to see a girl make herself look cheap."

Mr. Brentano threw his cigar butt away. "Are you insinuating . . ." he began slowly.

"I'm insinuating nothing," Mr. Doyle replied promptly. "I'm simply reminding you that you haven't got her yet."

Mr. Doyle watched his friend's face. He knew how much Mr. Brentano loved Gratia. He had never imagined that Mr. Brentano could fall in love that way. His admiration for his daughter increased when he paused to consider that it was her doing.

"Look here, Hector," he said. "Don't let things go wrong between us over a paltry hundred pounds. Of course I want you to marry her. She does too, now that she's got used to the idea. Let the hundred pounds stand over for a day or two. It's no use to me here." Mr. Doyle indicated the calm surface of the ocean. "What should I want with the money? I've got all I want to go on with." He emptied his glass and looked meaningly at Mr. Brentano. Mr. Brentano let him wait.

"Look here, Doyle," he said at length, "you and me have got to come to an understanding." Mr. Doyle pulled his chair up closer. His face was alight with anticipation. He realised that any understanding he came to with Mr. Brentano could scarcely fail to leave him better off than he was now.

"I have been thinking," said Mr. Brentano, sitting back and flicking the ash nonchalantly off his cigar, "over the idea of making you some sort of an allowance." Mr. Doyle passed his tongue nervously over his lips. "It won't be a large one," Mr. Brentano went on, "and it'll stop altogether if you try any funny business."

Mr. Doyle bowed his head meekly in acquiescence.

"I haven't settled the amount yet," Mr. Brentano explained with irritating vagueness. "It may be more. It may be rather less. It all depends on how things turn out."

"What things?" asked Mr. Doyle eagerly.

"Well," said Mr. Brentano, speaking with a slowness that maddened his companion. "We're men of the world, aren't we?"

Mr. Doyle nodded; he wondered desperately what the word implied.

"And being with Gratia all the time without being married to her isn't exactly pleasant. It's sort of unsettling. See?"

Mr. Doyle nodded. He was beginning to understand.

"That being the case," Mr. Brentano continued, "it occurs to me that we're sort of wasting time, Gratia and me, I mean."

A smile flickered for a moment across Mr. Doyle's face. "Well, what can I do about it?" he asked with a gesture of helplessness.

"You can go and tell the Captain that Gratia and me have decided to get married rather sooner than we intended. You can say that you would like him to do it."

"But why not ask him yourself?" enquired Mr. Doyle. "He's a special friend of yours. I'm sure he'd do a little thing like that for you."

"Gratia's a minor," replied Mr. Brentano pointedly.

"You're a hard man, Hector," he said, "trying to force a father's hand. You must understand that it's all very painful for me. A father doesn't like to be reminded of that sort of thing. Have you asked Gratia?"

"Yes," snapped Mr. Brentano. "It was evident what her views were."

Mr. Doyle shrugged his shoulders despairingly. "It's for her to decide. You know me too well to imagine that I'd force her to do anything against her will. Of course," he added after a pause, "I might be able to persuade her."

"I know," replied Mr. Brentano. "That's why I spoke to you."

"She'll be a lovely bride," said Mr. Doyle musingly, "a lovely bride."

He closed his eyes as though trying to picture her. "You were saying something about an allowance, weren't you?" he asked dreamily.

MR. BRENTANO was undressing to go to bed. He felt disturbed in his mind; disturbed and resentful. The Captain, for no reason at all, had opposed the plan of immediate marriage and had pointed to the clause in the Company's Nautical Code that referred to it. He had led Mr. Brentano to understand—very candidly it seemed—that in the case of couples where ceremony had not kept pace with Nature, he was empowered to act. Otherwise the Near and Far Eastern Shipping Co. took up an intransigent attitude towards such hasty unions.

Before he had asked him Mr. Brentano had taken a look round the ship. He had looked with a special purpose. And he had been disappointed. There was nothing which by any stretching of the imagination could be called a Bridal Suite; and Mr. Brentano was insistent that Gratia should have nothing but the best. There was, however, a largish double cabin on the upper deck. In it the Company's architect had fairly let himself go. The furniture was of rosewood and maple. Pink shaded electric lights decorated the wall. It was fit for a Viceroy. Mr. Brentano had resolved to have it and make up for it afterwards with something pretty grand in a hotel.

His desire for Gratia was becoming unbearable. He had never had to wait so long for anything that he had wanted. Had it all taken place on land when he had had plenty of business on hand to occupy his mind it would not have been so bad. But here it was a polite and agonising torture. He was going out of his mind for need of her and now on top of everything the Captain was behaving like a disgruntled old woman. There was Gratia in her cabin less than twenty-five yards away from his and he was not allowed to visit her.

She had worn her gold evening dress again that evening, and he had never seen her look so lovely; so lovely and so inviting. He could hardly drag himself away from her when he had kissed her good night. She was, he told himself, probably awake in her cabin at this very moment thinking about him.

Mr. Brentano swung the girdle of his dressing-gown backwards and forwards in his agitation.

He paused for a while, staring straight in front of him. His body was burning. This was the worst sort of agony he had ever endured. He had behaved like a gentleman and a Christian ever since he had come on board, never allowing himself more than the most jealous parent would have permitted him to take. And this was the result. His self-control was killing him. It was intolerable. To steady his nerves he rang for the steward and ordered a drink. The steward seemed inclined to stop and talk, but Mr. Brentano dismissed him.

The whisky and the torment of his own thoughts had flushed Mr. Brentano's face. It was now a disagreeable purple. The veins across the temples showed as large and distinct as if they had been inflated. He kept passing his hand across his forehead trying to sweep away the leaden bands that bound it. The old recurrent pain in the back of his neck bored its way into his spine.

"It's damn' ridiculous," Mr. Brentano said to himself, and found to his astonishment that he had said it aloud. "We're going to be married, aren't we? She's not a child," and he continued quietly, "It isn't as though it could do any harm. I'm going to play straight by her. And that's not the point either. The point is that I shall go mad, stark staring mad, if I don't."

He put his glass down on the dressing-table. His hand was shaking: the glass beat a little tattoo on the mahogany top. Then, walking very carefully as if he were afraid that he would be heard, he opened the cabin door and peered out along the alleyway. It was empty. At the far end lay Gratia's cabin.

Mr. Brentano was at heart a cautious man. He put a towel round his neck and clutched his black-and-white sponge bag. Then he slipped cautiously into the alleyway. No one could say anything to a man who was unable to sleep and felt in need of a bath. Midnight was little more than an hour ago.

The alleyway was as bare and uninviting as a shooting-gallery. Mr. Brentano stopped and listened to the hammering of his own heart. He had to struggle for control of himself before he could go on. It was absurd; he felt as nervous as a pickpocket. When a door beside him opened he stepped back instinctively. But the door closed itself again. It was opening and shutting regularly and gently with the motion of the ship.

He felt as though he were choking and loosened the heavy towel round his neck. His lips were dry and cracking; he moistened them with his tongue. He could not account for the way his heart was behaving; it was drubbing like a motor-cycle engine. It occurred to him that perhaps he had taken too much to drink. He told himself that it was nothing, and squaring his shoulders he went on.

Stephen saw him through the slits of the ventilator in the cabin door. He had got up and was trying to force them open. At present they strained the air like a sieve, letting only small particles reluctantly through. In the absence of a breeze even a draught would be welcome.

Suddenly past the white grille of the slits came the face of Mr. Brentano. The expression of good humour which it generally wore was missing. The eyes stared straight ahead; the tongue moved backwards and forwards across the heavy lips.

Stephen let him go past and then opened the cabin door very cautiously. It creaked alarmingly as though the hinges were being torn from the woodwork. But the whole *Tusitala* was creaking and groaning so much in its sleep that Mr. Brentano heard nothing. He took another half-dozen paces and stopped. Something told Stephen that Mr. Brentano would look over his shoulder. Why, he did not know; a man can go to the bathroom without being followed. But Stephen stepped back into his cabin. Mr. Brentano inspected the alleyway behind him and found it empty.

When Stephen looked out again Mr. Brentano was down on his knees peering through the keyhole of one of the cabin doors. Apparently satisfied with the result he tried the handle. The door opened; he disappeared inside. It was only then that the thought darted into Stephen's mind—that this must be Gratia's door.

He groped for his dressing-gown and pushed his feet hurriedly into his slippers. He was outside Gratia's door before Mr. Brentano had had time to do more than accustom his eyes to the gloom of the cabin. Gratia was sleeping like a child. Mr. Brentano could distinguish beside her on the pillow the dark mass of her black hair. For a moment doubt swept over Stephen outside, submerging him. He wondered if this meeting

was arranged, if this was an assignation that Mr. Brentano had stealthily and cautiously kept. Stephen's fears were set at rest.

"What is it?" he heard Gratia say in the high frightened voice that begins in sleep. Evidently Mr. Brentano had bumped against something. "Who is it?" she said. There was a click of an electric light switch and a horizontal slit of light jumped out at Stephen's feet.

"Sshh!" he heard Mr. Brentano say. "Don't send me away. You mustn't send me away." There was the sound of a heavy body coming down roughly on to a spring mattress. Gratia gave a little scream.

Stephen threw open the door and stepped in. Mr. Brentano looked at him as a burglar looks up the cold beam of a policeman's lantern. The fear in his eyes had given way to hatred. All the colour had gone from his face.

"What the——" he began.

"Get out of here," said Stephen abruptly.

Mr. Brentano turned suddenly to Gratia and caught her by the arm.

"Did you ask him to come? Did you? Answer me, can't you? Did you ask him?"

Before Gratia could speak Stephen had crossed the cabin. "Stop that," he said.

Mr. Brentano turned on him. "My God," he said. "I'll beat you up for this." He stood up beside the bunk and began to roll up his sleeves. They kept tumbling over his hands. It was only then that Stephen guessed that Mr. Brentano had been drinking.

Gratia leant forward and caught hold of his hand. "Don't," she said. "You mustn't. Get out of here, can't you? What are you doing in here, anyhow?" Mr. Brentano pulled himself free. "I'm going to settle you," he said to Stephen. He began

to advance towards him. There was only the monogrammed strip of carpet between them.

Stephen stood perfectly still. A strange exhilaration filled him. He waited ready for anything that Mr. Brentano might do.

Mr. Brentano did it quite suddenly. He rushed at Stephen without warning. It was then that Stephen struck. He hit him on the throat, full on the Adam's apple. Mr. Brentano threw up his arms and fell like a bad skater falling on ice. He lay on the floor and groaned. He kept raising his hand to his throat and moaning. Stephen bent over him. He made no effort to get up. Gratia reached for the dressing-gown that lay on the chair beside her bed.

"Is he all right?" she asked, anxiously.

Together they lifted Mr. Brentano on to the bed. His feet sagged on the floor. His black-and-white sponge bag still hung from his arm. Gratia got some water and splashed it on to his face. He was breathing in short hesitating gasps. His hands tried feebly to reach his throat. After a little while he opened his eyes. They stared vacantly at first and then they fell on Gratia. He smiled. Then he caught sight of Stephen. He looked full at him for a moment without recognition. Then he tried to shake off his hand. "I want to get back to my cabin," he said in a loose rattling voice. "I've been hurt." Large tears ran trickling down his cheeks.

Stephen put his arm round Mr. Brentano and hoisted him on the floor. He wanted to get him out of Gratia's cabin. Mr. Brentano could not stand. He clung round Stephen's neck. He even seemed grateful for what Stephen was doing. He was still quite dazed. He leant on Stephen as a friend.

Back in Mr. Brentano's cabin, Stephen made him as comfortable as he could. He lifted his feet on to the bed and took off his slippers. Mr. Brentano lay there breathing noisily and

grunting heavily after each breath. He was staring up at the ceiling.

"Are you all right?" Stephen asked. It was unnerving, the way Mr. Brentano at a single blow had dissolved into something as helpless and inoffensive as a baby.

Mr. Brentano did not reply.

Stephen switched on the light by his bed and looked at him. He saw Mr. Brentano screw up his eyes to avoid the brightness. His face was curiously suffused. All the blood in his body seemed to have climbed upwards to his head.

"Anything you want?" he asked.

Mr. Brentano opened his eyes and looked at him again as though he were a stranger. Then he seemed to go off to sleep.

Stephen turned off the light and left him.

Gratia was waiting for him at the door of her cabin. "Do you think we ought to get the doctor?" she asked.

Stephen shook his head. "He'll be all right in the morning," he said. "You ought to lock your door at nights." He realised instantly the futility of his remark. "Good night," he said, turning to go. "Don't worry. Everything will be all right."

As he stepped into the corridor he saw Mr. Doyle's door open. The white face and dishevelled head of Mr. Doyle himself came into sight. He peered out anxiously.

"Good night," said Stephen.

"Good night, yourself," said Mr. Doyle and closed the door again.

IT WAS THE STEWARD who made the discovery. He took in the devilled kidneys and coffee at nine-thirty and had to take them out again. He was not prepared for a shock of that kind. A mere eight hours ago everything had been proper and normal and now—this. He said a devout “My God,” and went off in search of Dr. Jarvis.

Dr. Jarvis did not like being disturbed so early. He frequently observed that if anyone had told him that the major physical processes, such as birth and death, took place at night and at other moments on the clock that were equally inconvenient he would never have entered the medical profession. But nobody had told him and there he was. “All right,” he grumbled. “I’ll come right away. Have you done anything about it?”

“I came straight to you, sir,” replied the steward.

“Quite correct. Do nothing in that sort of case until you’ve seen me.”

Dr. Jarvis put down his shaving brush, wiped the rest of the lather off his face. He applied a little cold cream because his skin was sensitive, and brushed his hair. In under five minutes he was ready to follow the steward. He carried his little black bag; he might have been preparing for an accouchement.

“When did you see him last?” he enquired.

“He rang for a drink just after midnight,” the steward told him.

Dr. Jarvis nodded his head understandingly. It was just as he had expected. In any case no one could say that he had not

done his duty. He had warned him in the presence of a witness. He had told him exactly what the end would be.

They stood together in the cabin in the presence of death. The steward hung back as though reluctant to approach the corpse. Dr. Jarvis had no such misgivings. He turned back the pink silk lapels of Mr. Brentano's pyjamas and applied the stethoscope. It was superfluous. The chill that came to his hand told him all that he needed to know. Mr. Brentano was the one cold thing in this world of heat.

For the sake of formality, Dr. Jarvis raised Mr. Brentano's eyelids. The eyes were fixed and uselessly staring. The steward quickly looked away. Mercifully Dr. Jarvis let down the eyelids again.

"He died in the night," said Dr. Jarvis with the air of a man who has made a profound discovery. He folded Mr. Brentano's hands across his breast. In life Mr. Brentano had been a big man. In death he seemed huge. He bulged over the side of the narrow bed. Dr. Jarvis thoughtfully inserted a pillow under him on the outer side. He did not want anything unseemly to happen if the boat rocked.

"I'm going to the Captain," he said. "I want you to wait here."

"Very good, sir," said the steward and took up his place on the outside of the door.

The Captain was in his small cabin, writing a letter. Dr. Jarvis was frequently amazed at the activities of his Captain as a correspondent. Any mail boat which left a port at which the *Tusitala* had touched carried back to England one of the Captain's neatly written missives with the initials of the N. & F. E. S. Co. on the envelope. At times there must have been as many as half-a-dozen ships all carrying his letters to England. He looked up with a preoccupied stare when Dr. Jarvis entered. The Captain believed in making his letters

home informative and was trying for the fortieth time to think of a good descriptive phrase to depict the Indian Ocean in a heat wave.

"I've got some bad news, Captain," reported Dr. Jarvis.

"Indeed," the Captain raised his eyebrows. He could not help noticing that Dr. Jarvis's collar and tie were a disgrace.

Dr. Jarvis smiled, secure in his sense of importance. The Captain could not afford to be superior when he heard the news.

"Mr. Brentano's dead," he observed simply. "Died in the night."

Captain Curly stopped short in the middle of a sentence. "Good God," he said. It was the only time Dr. Jarvis had heard him blaspheme. When Captain Curly came to finish the letter he crossed out the beginning; so his wife never knew what it felt like when the thermometer stood high and the barometer remained up in sympathy.

"I suppose I'd better see the body for myself," remarked the Captain when he had grown used to the idea of the death.

"I didn't know," remarked Dr. Jarvis, "that you were a student of morbid anatomy." He had been longing for years to get in a little jab like that.

"I'm not," Captain Curly replied blandly. "But I'm supposed to satisfy myself about everything on my ship."

"Someone has got to break this to the girl," said Dr. Jarvis.

"I know," replied Captain Curly. "I was thinking of doing so."

"Perhaps I . . ." began Dr. Jarvis. "I've been attending her."

"No," said Captain Curly firmly, "this is the Captain's duty."

"But really I couldn't allow it. Not to-day." Dr. Jarvis tried to look as though his mind was made up. "The shock you know, Captain; very impressionable girl. Might break her up to hear it put clumsily."

The Captain looked hard at Dr. Jarvis. "I wasn't proposing to put it clumsily," he said. "We'll tell her father. Then it'll be his affair."

Captain Curly was shocked by the lifelessness of Mr. Brentano. He had seen death before in its many forms, but he never remembered having seen anyone look more completely dead than his late passenger. The sting of death and the victory of the grave were final and beyond dispute.

The whisky glass of last night and the row of silk neckties, as bright as a slice of rainbow, hanging beside the wash-basin, added to the peculiar pathos of the spectacle. Here was a man who had enjoyed life and had worn himself out trying to get the most out of it.

The Captain and Dr. Jarvis found Mr. Doyle still asleep. The steward—he was the same who had attended Mr. Brentano—let them into the cabin and would evidently have liked to remain there. He was used to the idea of death by now. The surprised and unmelting eye of the Captain showed him, however, that he was not required.

Mr. Doyle was sleeping quietly and deeply, his head pillowed on his arm, when they found him. It was the sleep of a good man at peace with the world; the perfect sleep of an easy conscience.

He started up nervously on his elbow and began to get out of bed.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Please don't get up, Mr. Doyle," said Captain Curly softly, in his low purring voice. "It's nothing to be alarmed about."

Mr. Doyle let out a sigh of relief. "Forgive me, gentlemen," he said. "I was dreaming when you came in."

The Captain took a seat at the foot of the bed. Dr. Jarvis leant comfortably against the wardrobe.

"I'm afraid I've got some bad news for you, Mr. Doyle," said Captain Curly.

"I know it, I know it," replied Mr. Doyle. "Mr. Brentano told me. I quite understand your objections. I only wanted to say that Gratia wishes it and I give my consent, my entire consent."

"Mr. Brentano is dead," said Captain Curly.

Mr. Doyle looked at him incredulously for a moment. It seemed an extraordinary thing to say. It was only after a few seconds that it occurred to him that Captain Curly might be serious.

"You can't mean it," exclaimed Mr. Doyle. "Not really dead?"

"Died last night," Dr. Jarvis put in. "Clot of blood on the brain."

"I didn't know you had performed an autopsy yet," remarked the Captain suavely.

"I was treating him," replied Dr. Jarvis. "I expected him to die." The answer was not so satisfactory as Dr. Jarvis had hoped that it would be. He added hastily. "He had blood pressure, you know. I warned him about it. But he was obstinate. Now he's paid the price."

"Mr. Brentano dead." Mr. Doyle kept on repeating it, obviously unable to believe it. "Mr. Brentano dead; Mr. Brentano . . ."

"Someone has got to break the news to the young lady," Captain Curly interrupted him.

"It'll have to be done very tactfully," Dr. Jarvis reminded

him. "She was very much attached to him. I've had experience of such matters."

The Captain was looking at Mr. Doyle with amazement. He had recovered from the first shock. He was now master of himself again; but not altogether. With his lips drawn back from his little yellow teeth, he was looking at Captain Curly with violent, unconcealed hate. Captain Curly hoped that he was mistaken, that it was some trick of the light. But it was true. Mr. Doyle suddenly leant forward, his scraggy neck protruding from his pyjama jacket, and shouted full in the Captain's face. "Do you realise what you've let me in for? And all because you wouldn't do your duty and marry 'em when I asked you. My God, the owners of the Line will hear about this. I'll make 'em pay for it. I'll have compensation if it has to be dragged out of *your* pocket. Every penny of it; every penny. You've ruined me. That's what you've done. . . ."

Mr. Doyle scrambled hurriedly out of bed. He was wearing a nightshirt. Captain Curly noted with distaste that his knees were yellow and knobbly. He wrapped a tartan travelling-rug around him. The awful thought crossed Captain Curly's mind that Mr. Doyle contemplated going out into the alleyway in that costume. He was right. Mr. Doyle pushed his way violently past them.

Gratia's cabin stood next door. Mr. Doyle broke into it as though the ship were on fire. "Gratia! Gratia!" they could hear him crying out. "Have you got anything from Hector in writing? My God, you don't understand. Hector's dead. Died last night. We're ruined. You little fool. It's all your fault, do you hear me? All your fault. All your fault. . . ."

There was the sound of a grown man breaking down with tears of rage and mortification.

NOW THAT THE STEWARD had got used to the thing on the bed in what had been Mr. Brentano's cabin, he felt excited and, in some strange fashion, secretly elated. It was something to think about, something to talk about, something which cut across the ordinary routine of life, like a holiday. He felt the need of talking to someone about it, and with a flash of pleasure suddenly remembered Stephen. When he had taken Mr. MacFadyen's breakfast in earlier that morning he had imagined that the gentleman in the other cabin was quietly sleeping in the magnificence of his pink and black *crêpe-de-Chine* pyjamas. He had not known then that Fate was about to excel herself.

He found Stephen dressed and ready to go on deck. It gave him quite a shock to see the way he looked. He was pale, with dark circles under his eyes. There would be nothing exciting in it, the steward reflected hurriedly, if Stephen died too. That would mean an epidemic of food poisoning or something of the sort. He had been at sea long enough to know what that meant. Under the Blue Peter outside a foreign port and the whole sea front training their telescopes and binoculars on to you as though they hoped to *see* you dying.

"I just thought I'd tell you, sir, in case you wondered what they was up to. There's been a haccident."

"What sort of accident?" Stephen asked quickly.

The steward could have sworn that he saw him start nervously.

"It's the gentleman in forty-three, sir. Mr. Brentano. He passed over in the night."

"Do you mean he's dead?" asked Stephen. His voice sounded flat and unnatural.

"Yes, sir; passed over." The steward came of religious stock that never referred to death by its real name.

"Have you told anyone about this?" said Stephen. "Have you reported it?" He wanted to get to Gratia quickly before anyone else could get to her.

"Oh yes, sir," replied the steward, conscious of the not inconsiderable part that he had been playing in this little drama. "The doctor and the Captain have just been in there with him. He died peaceful, by the look of him." The steward gave the understanding nod of one mortal to another. "There'll have to be a inquest. There always is."

"An inquest," Stephen repeated dully.

"Yes, sir," said the steward breaking off suddenly. "Excuse me, sir." There was the sound of feet in the alleyway and the steward wanted to miss nothing. He knew that if he were absent from his post for a moment the steward who attended to numbers twenty-eight to thirty-six would step in at once and share the fun. Stephen's steward resented this. A passenger's death, he felt, was the perquisite of his personal steward; just like a tip. He reflected ruefully that a pretty sizable tip had vanished before his eyes.

Stephen let the steward get out of sight and then walked hurriedly along to Gratia's cabin. He knocked at the door and got an immediate answer. Gratia was up and dressed. Her face was quite colourless. She looked as if she had been crying.

"You've heard the news?" he asked.

Gratia nodded.

"Do you realise," Stephen asked hoarsely, "that I hit him in here last night? He was all right then."

Gratia closed her eyes for a brief space. It was evident that she was haunted by the same fears.

"I suppose I ought to tell them," said Stephen.

"You can't," Gratia exclaimed. "They'll hang you."

"They couldn't," said Stephen firmly. "It's only manslaughter, if you come to think of it. It's really justifiable homicide. Perhaps it's not even that. He was all right when I left him. If you explained how things happened they'd never bring in a verdict."

It seemed to Stephen as he stood there that he was talking of someone else, about an entirely different human being who had done something foolish and disastrous, something that could grotesquely lead him by the tortuous path of evidence and prosecution into the dock. It was ridiculous to think of it as referring to himself. He tried to smile at the absurdity of the idea, but somehow the joke was not quite plain enough for that.

Gratia got up suddenly and came over to him. "You mustn't say anything about having been here," she said. "No one saw you, did they?"

Stephen shook his head.

"Then you mustn't say a word. It would be madness. No one knows that he"—she left the name expressively unsaid—"came in here. There's no need for you—and me—to be dragged into it. It's all happened now, and it's over. Nothing we can do will ever put it right."

Gratia got up from the bed and went towards the door.

"Stop!" he said abruptly. "I want to speak to you."

She waited in front of him, anxious, questioning. Her eyes, wide open and surprised, showed their dark lights. She had wound her long hair round her head; it glowed like a black halo.

There was a pause. She knew what he was going to ask her.

"You're going to marry me now, aren't you?" he said.

Gratia did not reply immediately.

"How can we?" she answered at last. "Now that this has happened. Don't you see that we should have this between us always? We should remember it always. I . . . I . . ." She paused and swayed as though she were about to faint.

He came towards her but she held him away from her. "Don't," she said. "You must let me go. I've got to go now."

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"I'm going to find Father Manoel," she replied. "Nobody's told him yet."

Stephen walked slowly back to his own cabin alone. Outside cabin forty-three the steward was standing. He had the dignity of a sentinel. The dignity broke down for a moment as Stephen passed. The steward jerked his thumb back over his shoulder towards the cabin. "'E's in there doing it now," he whispered significantly. "Post mortem."

So Gratia had gone to arrange a special mass for Mr. Brentano; it was an extraordinary idea. What did she imagine would happen to what remained of him if the mass were delayed? Did she think that the soul of Hector Brentano would burn for ever in Hell if little Father Manoel in the Third Class of the S.S. *Tusitala* failed to get in his word with the Almighty in time? Not that the idea of Hell was in itself unlikely. Stephen's Presbyterian upbringing compelled him to admit that such an end was no more than a just and reasonable fate after such a life. The idea of Hell for Hector Brentano appealed strongly to Stephen.

When Gratia found Father Manoel he was sitting by himself in a corner of the chocolate-brown Third Class lounge, playing Patience. He dealt with remarkable rapidity and complete absorption. It was evident that cards were his staple leisure-hour occupation. He kept absent-mindedly shuffling them as he spoke to her. The cards made a sibilant *frpp-frpp* as the two sets interlocked.

He heard the details with professional calm. Then he put back his cards into their leather case and prepared to go about his duty. Almost before Gratia had reached the metal grille which divided the Third Class from the First Class, Father Manoel, in the empty cabin which the steward, himself a Roman Catholic, had placed at his disposal, was diligently and painstakingly engaged on his private, sacerdotal task. He did not emerge for nearly an hour. He had arrived at a pretty shrewd idea of the manner of man that Mr. Brentano had been.

Gratia met Mr. Doyle as soon as she came back to her cabin. He was walking up and down like a sentry. He looked ill and anxious. He had no gift for concealing his emotions. "Where have you been?" he asked irritably. "I've been looking everywhere for you."

"I've been down with Father Manoel," Gratia replied.

The information sobered Mr. Doyle. "Good girl," he said approvingly. "I'm glad you remembered. You've saved me the trouble. I was just about to go down myself."

Gratia began to move away. Mr. Doyle called her back.

"Gratia dear," he said softly. "We've got to have a long serious talk together. You know how I've always tried to keep anxiety and worry away from you. I've deliberately placed myself in between just to protect you. Well, I can't this time." He took her hand in his and fondled it. "Because you're far too deep in this for me to attempt to keep things from you."

Gratia said nothing. Her father elbowed her into his cabin. He followed her in and closed the door after him.

"We've got to hold a council of war," he said. "We've got to see what can be done. I'll lay all my cards on the table. We've got just a hundred pounds between us and starvation. The hotel in Penang isn't worth the price of pulling down.

The site's rotten. It's lousy. The whole place isn't worth a dollar."

Gratia looked at him steadily and coldly. "Then why did you tell Mr. Brentano it is?" she asked.

"He was a business man, too," said Mr. Doyle simply. "He understood."

"Is the hundred pounds the money he gave you?"

Mr. Doyle nodded.

"But you told him you'd lost it," Gratia exclaimed.

"I know," said Mr. Doyle. "So I had. I found it again. It had slipped through a torn lining. I've lost things like that before. I'll thank you to repair it sometime."

"When did you find it?" Gratia asked. "Before he died or after?"

He avoided her gaze. "Just before," he admitted. "But I had no opportunity of telling him. It's a pity. He'd have been glad to know that it was all right."

"You tried to get more out of him. You know you did." Gratia faced him angrily.

"Please, please," expostulated Mr. Doyle. "In any case he had plenty. More than you're ever likely to have now. Of course there's a chance, just a chance in a thousand, that we may be able to get some of it—for you, of course. We've got witnesses that he meant to marry you. Did he actually write anything?"

Gratia shook her head.

"There's the ring," Mr. Doyle said musingly. "Keep it safe. It's worth a great deal to us, far more than just itself, I mean. It's evidence. You wouldn't like me to keep it for you until we go ashore?"

"No, thank you," said Gratia.

"Well, don't forget the pearls," he remarked quietly. "You can't be wearing them all the time. They might get snatched from your neck." Mr. Doyle gave a brief imperson-

ation of a pearl snatcher at work. "They're more evidence. I'd better mind them for you."

"They're all right where they are," Gratia replied.

Mr. Doyle got up and moved towards the door. "Perhaps you'll allow your own father to know better for once," he said sternly. "He's had more experience of the world than you have. Anyone could pop in there and steal them. I'll wear them here." He tapped his waistcoat pocket meaningly. Then, opening the door he remarked over his shoulder: "I'm going to get them now while there's still time. Come along, dear, and show me where they are."

Gratia followed Mr. Doyle along the alleyway to her cabin. He stepped back for her to get past him. She did so with astonishing speed, and slammed the door full in his face. To his rage and amazement he heard the sound of a bolt being shot into place.

"They're here," Gratia shouted through the door. "And they're going to stay here."

Mr. Doyle raised his foot to kick furiously at the panel of the door, when he saw the sullen-faced stewardess regarding him with unfriendly eyes. He checked himself.

"Ring if you want anything, dear," he called out airily. "And keep on ringing till someone comes. It's a rotten ship for service."

As he passed the stewardess he gave her one of his most ingratiating smiles.

THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN was overcrowded; overcrowded and hot. It was so full that no one could move without having to apologise to someone else. Captain Curly himself had retreated, together with his chair, into a corner of the room and sat facing the rest of the company as if he were entertaining them. His face was a shining and excited pink. Despite the heat, his collar was fixed tightly and neatly round his neck. Only a closer inspection could reveal that it clung to his skin like a sticky bandage. Perspiration like raindrops ran down his forehead.

Mr. Doyle was sitting back in his chair, his feet upon the Captain's tea-table. He had complained of not feeling well, and had made one or two resentful comments in a carrying undertone on the Captain's lack of forethought in offering him nothing to drink. The Captain might have been deaf for all the notice he took. He even addressed a remark to Mr. Doyle while he was in the middle of one of his observations; Mr. Doyle was so surprised that he replied.

Stephen was sitting stiff and upright in his chair by the door. He looked ill and worried. Every time Captain Curly looked at him he felt pleased that someone was treating the matter with the respect it deserved.

Where he sat, Stephen could see the dark head and part of the smooth curve of the cheek of Gratia's face. She sat directly in front of the Captain. Her head drooped forward. Stephen watched her. He was wondering how it was that he had never noticed before how her eyelashes swept back from her eyes like black silk

To her right, and a little in front of Gratia, sat Dr. Jarvis, hoping that he could keep awake.

The Captain was speaking. He chose his phrases slowly and carefully like a chess-player selecting his moves. "It's a captain's duty," he said, "to have everything open and above board on his ship; everything."

"Hear, hear," said Mr. Doyle. It seemed the right thing to say. But the Captain ignored it.

"And why I asked you all to come here together," he continued, pursing up his lips after each word, "is because there is still one little matter left unexplained in connection with the sad death of our late passenger." Gratia stirred uneasily in her chair; Mr. Doyle took his feet down from the table.

The Captain continued. "Apparently he was missing for about a quarter of an hour before his death. No one seems to know where he got to. Was he with you, Mr. Doyle?"

Mr. Doyle regarded the Captain through narrowed eyes.

"No," he said, "he was not. I didn't see him again after he turned in, poor fellow. You understand, Captain, that it is very painful to me to lose a friend and a son-in-law this way. Do you think I might be allowed . . . ?"

"Very painful, I'm sure," replied Captain Curly brusquely. "Mr. MacFadyen, did he go into your cabin by any chance?"

Stephen paused before replying. He looked at Gratia. Her hands were behind her chair. She was twisting a handkerchief between her fingers. The rest of her was quite still and motionless. Only the nervous, twisting fingers showed what was in her thoughts.

"No, Captain Curly," said Stephen at last, "he didn't come into my cabin at all."

As he said the words, Gratia's handkerchief tore right across. The ripping sound brought Dr. Jarvis up with a jerk.

He looked round anxiously. His hand furtively explored the back of his clothes.

Captain Curly nodded and seemed about to address the same question to Gratia. He looked in her direction and paused ominously. Then he rang the bell that was beside him.

"Show the steward in," he said.

The steward was clearly nervous. He felt as he had done in the war when in the presence of brass hats, or once when as a young man he had stood, despite his religious upbringing, in the Swansea Police Court on a charge of assaulting a police officer while under the influence of drink.

"You saw Mr. Brentano leave his cabin, I believe?" Captain Curly began.

"Yes, sir," The steward said the words as though they stuck in his throat. Stephen saw Gratia's hands tighten again on her screwed-up handkerchief.

"What time would that be?"

"About one o'clock in the morning, sir."

"What was he doing?"

"He was going to have a bath, sir."

"How do you know?"

"Well, sir, he'd got his towel and 'is sponge bag. He wouldn't have been carrying them if 'e 'adn't been going to . . ."

"Thank you," said Captain Curly, "that will do." He rang the bell again. "Send in the bathroom steward," he said.

It was at once apparent from his manner that the bathroom steward thought that they suspected him of having murdered Mr. Brentano and washed away the stains. He stood stiffly to attention, keeping his brilliant red hands at his side.

"Did Mr. Brentano always ask you to fill his bath for him?"

"Yes, sir," replied the bathroom steward. He wondered if he had compromised himself already.

"Did you ever know him to take a bath without?"

"No, sir." He felt sure now that this was leading up to something. He had read somewhere that the clever thing to say was, "I decline to make a statement until I have spoken to my solicitor." But he had never had a solicitor. What could he do?

"Did he ask you to prepare his bath on the night in question?"

"No, sir." The bathroom steward was convinced that he had been trapped.

"In point of fact, did anyone have a bath that night?"

"Not to the best of my knowledge, sir." He said it with a rush: the words had the natural dignity of a formula.

"Thank you," said the Captain. "You may go."

The bathroom steward went suddenly limp. "Thank you, sir," he said. He felt like a man who has been granted a reprieve in error. He expected them to snatch him back as he reached the door.

"Well," said Captain Curly, speaking with obvious restraint, "you all heard what the steward said. Has anyone any observations to make?"

No one spoke.

"Have you, Dr. Jarvis?" the Captain enquired, suddenly raising his voice.

Dr. Jarvis started up. "Clot of blood on the brain," he said. "No doubt about it in my opinion." He was relieved to find that the answer apparently fitted the question. Owing to the heat he had momentarily dozed off.

Captain Curly got slowly to his feet. "Well, gentlemen," he said, "there is nothing more we can do. We had better adjourn. One moment, Miss Doyle." Gratia started as he

mentioned her name. "I would like to have a word with you, if you don't mind. You must understand you were Mr. Brentano's closest relative, so to speak."

"You won't need me?" asked Mr. Doyle.

"No, thank you," the Captain replied.

Mr. Doyle took hold of Stephen's arm and drew him through the doorway. Apparently he was reluctant to come. Mr. Doyle could not understand it. Dr. Jarvis followed, stretching and yawning. Gratia and Captain Curly were left alone together.

"Now, Miss Doyle," said the Captain, in a voice so soft that it seemed strangely intimate, "do you know where Mr. Brentano was during that quarter of an hour?"

Gratia kept her eyes to the floor.

The Captain repeated his question, even softer this time. He barely breathed the words.

"He was in my cabin," said Gratia in a low hoarse voice. She did not look at the Captain.

"Thank you," said Captain Curly gently. "That's all I wanted to know."

"Does . . . does anyone have to be told?" she asked.

The Captain paused. He was grateful for such a moment. Everything depended on him. He could be officious; or he could do the big thing. He had decided beforehand on the latter.

"That depends on me," he said. "Strictly speaking I should log it. But in this case I don't propose to do so. You've had your punishment." Captain Curly came over to her and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Young lady," he said, "take the advice of an old stager and be careful."

To Gratia's surprise she wanted to cry. Captain Curly noticed this. He felt it did her credit.

When she had gone Captain Curly turned to his log-book. He was thinking out a little masterpiece of descriptive narrative writing for the owners. There are some things you do not write down no matter how conscientious you are. They give a bad name to a ship. And Captain Curly did not in the least want that to happen.

On the whole he was pleased with the way things had turned out, very pleased. It was only right and proper that a captain should know more about the happenings on his ship than anyone else.

Dr. Jarvis was still as far from the truth as ever. Captain Curly pitied him. He knew that if he, Captain Curly, had got as near to a piece of scandal as that, he would not have rested until he had found out the underlying truth.

He dipped his pen and began to write.

THE SHIP'S SAILMAKER stood back and admired his own workmanship. It was, he reckoned, one of the neatest little jobs he had ever done. And not so little either. He ran his hand along the rough surface appreciatively; not a ripple anywhere. He had worked with the care of a dressmaker, pinning out the whole covering before he had begun to use the needle. And he felt rewarded. The gentleman himself should feel pleased, poor fellow, he reflected. He had given him a double thickness of the best canvas, and because he was a First Class passenger he had wrapped him in one of the Company's linen sheets. Hector Brentano was now a long fat cocoon, stiff enough to stand on his feet if placed on end.

Dr. Jarvis came down and gave the object a final survey. He could find nothing wrong with it. That pleased the sailmaker. The true craftsman, he did not want praise, he merely wanted to ensure that blame was impossible.

The sailmaker had paused once for a moment in his work to examine the broad purple stain on Hector Brentano's throat. Where Stephen had hit him a stain like crushed mulberries now extended across Mr. Brentano's neck. The sight of it made the sailmaker temporarily feel queer. Heat was a terrible and disturbing thing; it recognised no barriers, drew no distinctions, showed respect to none.

At twelve o'clock midnight, the steward and the sailmaker returned carrying a stretcher. They had some difficulty in getting it through the door. Only by tilting it could it be managed. The sailmaker, who was a practical man, shook his head. "It's no use trying," he said. "We'll have to carry *it*"—he nodded meaningly in the direction of the cabin—"out separate and fix things up here." The steward felt suddenly sick again. He did not hang back, however. He wanted to be sure that it was only the feet he had to hold.

When they were ready the mate came down to meet them. He led the procession. His black gloves gave a stateliness to the occasion that otherwise would have been missing. The steward, who had asked to be given the front of the stretcher, where he did not have to look down on the load he was carrying, found himself in danger of treading on the mate's heels. If the mate had been carrying sixteen stone and a bit more, the steward reflected, he might have hurried a bit. As it was, he walked slowly, as befitted such a cortège. The steward had forgotten that the sailmaker always weighted such packages to ensure their sinking.

They stopped on deck alongside the little platform that the carpenter had erected. It was collapsible, and when not in use

was stored away behind the men's mess room. When assembled it was, the carpenter prided himself, as firm as any other part of the ship. With a large white tablecloth over it, it was, moreover, an object of considerable impressiveness, startlingly remote from its surroundings, like a military altar on a battlefield.

There was a little group already on deck. The Captain was there. And Dr. Jarvis. And Stephen. Gratia, in defiance of the Captain's warning that it would only upset her, stood beside him. Despite the heat she was shivering. Stephen could see her trembling; a faint continuous vibration. They were a dark funereal group. Only Mr. Doyle was missing.

Standing apart, startlingly white in his official vestments, was Father Manoel. He did not join in the low conversation. He was mysterious and remote. Occasionally, his lips moved for a moment. Otherwise he might merely have been looking at the view. Captain Curly regarded him with displeasure.

The night was perfect. The sky above the ship was a deep transparent violet, lit by strange stars that had grown bigger every day as the *Tusitala* steamed south. Absolute placidity reigned overhead. The darkness had taken on a deep, indefinable quality of quietness. The only sounds were the throb of the engines. Suddenly these stopped; it was the *Tusitala's* last mark of respect. The ship subsided into rest. The change in motion was as sudden as though they had run over something. There was now only the sound of water slapping idly against the sides. The sea was as level as a lawn. The ship appeared to be passing over rather than through it.

Nevertheless, there must have been a swell, too long and slow for the eye to detect. For the *Tusitala* was rolling, leisurely and gracefully, sending the stars slanting across the sky and sweeping the illuminated heavens with its mast tips.

"Upsadaisy," said the carpenter under his breath. To-

gether they heaved. There was a brief struggle in mid-air and then they mastered their load. The grey canvas roll was safely deposited on the funerary table, the feet pointing out to sea. The steward stepped politely back out of sight. The carpenter contrived to stand near. He had one more act to perform.

The priest came forward with the assurance of an actor-manager stepping on to his own stage. He was a different man. He had acquired a new dignity. He had grown larger. His surplice, which hitherto had seemed like a property in a charade, now fitted him with the natural dignity of a toga. He reigned. When he raised his hands over the bundle in front of him he was no longer Father Henriques Manoel, Portuguese subject and Third Class passenger on board a second-rate steamship, but a mysterious priest committing to the awful care of Almighty God the undying soul of a fellow mortal.

Even Captain Curly was conscious of the sublimity of Father Manoel's performance. "After all it's his job," he said to himself by way of consolation. "He ought to do it well."

"*Miserere mei Deus: secundum magnam misericordiam tuam,*" he intoned with the indecent fluency of all Latins using their own language. "*Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum: dele iniquitatem meam.*" His voice was so musical that it made Dr. Jarvis want to drowse off. He found himself nodding like a child being sung to sleep.

Stephen looked at Gratia. Her eyes were fixed on the deck at the priest's feet. Her lips were moving, a faint murmur came from them. "*Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam: et exultabunt ossa humiliata,*" Stephen heard her saying. It disconcerted him. Frightened him almost. Gratia and Father Manoel moved in strange lands where he could not follow. Stephen had never felt more lonely or further from Gratia than at that moment.

"*Domine Jesu Christ, Rex gloriae, libera animas omnium fidelium*

defunctorum de poenis inferni . . ." slurred the priest; and all that the device of man could do for the soul of the departed had been done. He stepped back.

The mate signalled to the carpenter. He emerged from the shadow of the boat deck and removed a pin from the table. Two sailors came forward. They put their shoulders under the trestle table and began to lift. The table stood at an angle of fifty degrees to the water and still the body remained motionless. They heaved higher. The load continued to stick. Then the mate made a sign to the carpenter. He gave a little push. The body of Mr. Brentano with its load of iron at the foot shot overboard like a torpedo.

There was absolute silence for a moment. Then a heavy "Perlup!" At the same moment there was a cry from behind them. It was Mr. Doyle. He rushed up to the rail and looked over. But he was too late. There were only a few bubbles and the widening rings of ripples. These were already becoming lost. A few moments later there was nothing. The last visible trace was obliterated.

Mr. Brentano, turning slowly over and over, was already ten fathoms beneath them, vertically drifting down into a green world that every moment became blacker and more black.

Stephen put his arm round Gratia to support her. She collapsed on to him.

The night was still brilliant with stars. There was the sound of a bell on the bridge. It jarred on the ears; it was a harsh reminder of the mechanical age in a romantic world.

The message of the bell reached the engine-room. The *Tusitala* gave a shiver and vibrated again into movement.

AFTER THE BURIAL, Gratia broke down completely. In the Captain's eyes it was one more thing in her favour. It showed that she was a woman with a heart. He felt fatherly and affectionate towards her now that he shared her secret. He could tell that she was grateful to him for the way in which he had handled the whole matter. He had not studied human nature for nothing.

Dr. Jarvis shook his head. "It's no use worrying," he said to Gratia after he had listened to her heart, "that won't do you any good. You've been through a terrible ordeal. You've lost the person you love most in all this world. It stands to reason that it must have upset you. Your heart, dear, is going just like this." Dr. Jarvis imitated the flight of a butterfly with his fingers. "You'll just have to lie here and take things very gently."

He looked down on her and smiled. With her white face framed by the dark braids of her hair she looked very beautiful. Dr. Jarvis felt strong and sentimental.

Stephen tried hard to see Gratia. Each time the grim stewardess prevented him. "She's asleep," she said. "Dr. Jarvis told me not to have her disturbed in any circumstances." The stewardess stood firmly in front of Gratia's door. It was evident that only by force—considerable force—could she be moved. The expression on her face suggested that she was fully prepared if Stephen should attempt it.

Stephen lunched alone. Mr. Doyle was absent and the Captain ate solitary in his cabin. The affairs of the last few days had given him a nervous headache. The dining-saloon

was dismally empty. It was as cheerless as a theatre after a performance. Stephen saw the honeymoon couple looking tremulously at the empty place where Hector Brentano had sat. They were in the midst of life and found a strange excited pleasure in contemplating death from a safe distance. It magnified the present exultant pleasure of living.

Stephen walked on deck, an isolated, conspicuous figure. No one was about. The faces that looked down from the bridge were the only sign of a directing human intelligence. Apart from them the *Tusitala* might have been moving under the guidance of Divine Providence. The world into which they had forced their way was a hot world, hotter than anything Stephen had ever known. It was very different from the dry, hard heat of the Suez Canal that had bleached and burned. This was a damp miasmal heat. It rotted things. The deck-chair canvas felt damp to the hand; or it may have been that the hand itself was damp, perpetually damp. Cold water pipes ran large tears down their length. The water carafe when put into the cabin at night was misted right across its surface. Brass-work, hitherto as bright as a soldier's buttons, now looked sluttish and uncared for.

After dinner that evening—another lonely melancholy meal—Stephen returned down to his cabin. The heat had sapped the strength from him like a long illness. He wanted to lie down somewhere full length, but he disliked the idea of making an exhibition of himself in the saloon.

In her little office beside Gratia's cabin the stewardess sat watchful and alert. She started protectively to her feet when she saw Stephen but sank back into her chair when he passed into his own cabin.

He had been in there about ten minutes when there was a knock at the door. It was Mr. Doyle. "Do you mind if I come in?" he asked when he was firmly inside.

"I'm resting," Stephen said. He hoped that Mr. Doyle would go away. Mr. Doyle, however, obviously had no intention of going away. There was an expression on his face, half smile, half leer, that Stephen had seen before.

"I want to have a little talk with you, Mr. MacFadyen, if you don't mind. And I thought that here would be the best place. It would be a pity if we were disturbed."

"Won't to-morrow do as well?" Stephen asked.

"No, Mr. MacFadyen," said Mr. Doyle with quiet decisiveness. "I'm afraid that it will not." He took a chair opposite Stephen and sat looking at him accusingly.

Stephen regarded him with amazement. He could not understand him. He seemed to have been less affected by the heat than any of them. His face was calm and composed. Only an unnatural brightness of the eyes that might have been due to drink betrayed that he was in any way excited.

"All right then," said Stephen. "Fire away."

Mr. Doyle got up and pushed the bolt of the door into place. "Safer," he said simply and then resumed his seat. "Now, Mr. MacFadyen," he began with the deceptive gentleness of a prosecuting counsel opening a long address. "I didn't say anything the other day when Captain Curly was asking where poor Hector had been, did I?"

"No," Stephen agreed.

"I didn't say anything that could hurt anyone—anyone who wouldn't have liked to get himself mixed up in it all, I mean?"

"What are you driving at?" Stephen asked.

The small pale eyes of Mr. Doyle sparkled even more brightly. He might even have been thought to have been enjoying himself. "Can't you guess?" he asked. "Can't you remember anything that happened that night?"

Stephen got up off the bed and came over to Mr. Doyle.

Mr. Doyle waited for a moment without flinching. Then his nerve went. He jumped up and thrust his chair in between himself and Stephen. "If you touch me I shall scream," he said. "And I'll tell the truth to the first person who comes in. You see if I don't."

"Tell them what truth?"

"That I saw you go into my daughter's cabin late the other night, and then I saw you coming out of poor Hector's cabin afterwards. And then next morning poor Hector was dead and you didn't know anything about it. It's a very funny story, very funny indeed." Mr. Doyle gave a little tee-hee-hee of sham amusement. "It wouldn't sound well, Mr. MacFadyen, before a jury."

"I can explain that perfectly well," Stephen replied.

"I am sure you can," Mr. Doyle answered. "But who would believe it? That's the question. Who would believe a single damn, word of it, whatever you can think of to say?"

Stephen looked Mr. Doyle up and down. He was only half the size of an ordinary man. His white tufts of hair stuck out from his head like wet feathers. Anxiety had contorted his small lined face. Stephen wondered if he should pick him up and throw him out into the alleyway, screams and all, leaving him to go off and tell his story to whomever he chose. "And had you thought about Gratia in all this? Where would she be if you went off and told the Captain that you had seen me going into her cabin?" he asked.

"Poor girl," said Mr. Doyle. "Poor little Gratia. Where will she be anyhow? It gets round. That sort of thing always does. A scandal just before a girl's marriage can be a terrible thing. It hangs over her all her life."

"Then what do you propose?" he asked. He could not discover from the face of Mr. Doyle what he was thinking. Now it was the smile, now the leer, that was in the ascendant.

"I propose," said Mr. Doyle, with the air of a man delivering a master-stroke, "that you should marry Gratia as soon as we land." He sat back to observe the effects of his proposal. He was evidently very drunk.

Stephen laughed in his face. "I am going to marry her," he replied.

"Oh, you are, are you?" Mr. Doyle said suddenly. The smile had vanished; only the leer remained. He seemed to have become suddenly sober again. "And how are you going to do that without my consent, I should like to know?" Stephen made no answer, and Mr. Doyle continued in a tittering undertone. "You didn't lose much time, young man, did you? Poor Hector only buried last night—he's still floating about somewhere out there—and here you are talking as though you had it all cut and dry. It leaves a nasty taste in the mouth." He shook his head sadly.

"Well," said Stephen, "why didn't you wait?"

"I couldn't," replied Mr. Doyle simply. "It was my duty to do something now. I have my responsibilities as a father. If my daughter can't manage her own affairs I have to do what I can to help her. I've been observing a lot of little things between you two but I haven't said anything. Yes, Mr. MacFadyen, I've been your friend. I could have put a spoke in your wheel a long time ago but I didn't. I may not be a very active man but I notice a lot. I could have spoken but I kept quiet. I could have dropped a hint to poor Hector that Gratia was deceiving him but I kept my mouth shut."

"Deceiving him." Stephen caught Mr. Doyle by the lapels of his coat and began to shake him. Mr. Doyle was no heavier than a child. He jerked to and fro as Stephen shook him.

"You can kill me as well if you like," gasped Mr. Doyle between the jerks, "but it wouldn't be any good. Someone would see you. You'd better let me go. I'm not so young as I

was. You couldn't get two dead men back to their cabins unnoticed."

Stephen let go of him so suddenly that he collapsed into his chair. Mr. Doyle choked for breath. "I notice things," he went on when he had recovered from the jolt. "I noticed a long time ago that Gratia didn't mind having you in her cabin. That was funny, wasn't it, when she wouldn't have her own fiancé with her? But I didn't say anything. I didn't even open my lips the evening I saw you up on the boat deck. You may have thought that I didn't see. But I did. I saw everything."

Stephen let Mr. Doyle talk. It was no use trying to stop him. He was evidently well away again. "Not that I want to be unpleasant in any way," he said. "Far from it. I liked you as soon as I set eyes on you. You'll remember we became pals at once." Mr. Doyle grew dreamy over the memory of their sudden and beautiful friendship. And he paused before resuming. "I never really liked poor Hector," he said. "A coarse blustering sort of fellow. We ought not to blame him I suppose. It was his nature. He couldn't help it. But he was never really Gratia's sort. I'd much prefer to see Gratia married to someone more of her own temperament. Your prospects aren't what I'd have liked, but beggars can't be . . ." Mr. Doyle left the rest of the proverb unfinished.

"What do you know about my prospects?" Stephen enquired.

"I asked the Captain," Mr. Doyle replied simply. "A very well-informed man."

"And what did he tell you?"

"My dear boy," Mr. Doyle answered. "I'm not going to betray confidences. But I'm not a man to imagine that happiness depends on money." He got up and shook hands with Stephen. His hand was as limp as a piece of cloth. "By

the way," he said, "I hate having to worry you but can you advance me fifty pounds until I can get to my bank in Penang? Unfortunately I had my pocket picked." The leer had disappeared, leaving only the smile. He might have been conferring a benefit on Stephen.

"No, I'm afraid I can't," said Stephen. He decided to take a firm line with Mr. Doyle, drunk or not.

"Oh yes, you can," observed Mr. Doyle very quietly. "Just you think a minute."

"I tell you I can't."

"Then if I can't have the money you can't marry Gratia. And if you aren't my son-in-law, what's to prevent me from going to the Captain now? Look at the whole thing sensibly and you'll see my point of view."

"So you're a blackmailer, are you?" Stephen asked.

"Blackmailers don't give their daughters away in marriage," Mr. Doyle replied, smiling in his face. "Blackmailers are out for money. I'm not. All I ask for is a little loan of fifty pounds and you start calling me names. I can tell you you've got a lot to learn if you think that it doesn't cost something to have a wife. I don't like that side of your nature, frankly I don't. I don't want my daughter to marry a mean man." He paused. "It'll be all right about the fifty pounds, won't it?" he asked, speaking so gently that he sounded almost affectionate.

"I'll let you know in the morning," Stephen said.

"Of course, of course," Mr. Doyle reassured him. "I shan't need the money till we actually land. The day we go ashore will be time enough." He got up to go. He seemed quite surprised to find that the door was still locked.

Stephen stayed behind. For the first time in his life he realised how it is that people who are being "blackmailed" generally end by paying up. He had the sensation of having his hands tied with invisible wire. And he knew that even if he

could free himself this time Mr. Doyle had endless rolls more of it in his pocket. There was a knock at the door. It was the stewardess. She carried a note in her hand. She gave it to Stephen as if it had been a pawn-ticket. The note ran: "Please come. I don't want to be alone." It was signed with a big sprawling "G." It was the first letter he had ever had from her.

"I'll come now," he said.

He had an ashamed foreboding at the back of his mind that Mr. Doyle would get his fifty pounds.

GRATIA AND STEPHEN could not get rid of him. Wherever they went he came too: on deck, in the smoking-room, in the saloon, he was always there. Gratia asked him several times to leave them. But Mr. Doyle would only leer knowingly and say that she must allow her old father to know best.

His presence seemed due as much to suspicion as to devotion. To cast him off was like trying to cast off Fate. If by any chance they managed to slip away to the boat deck to be alone together for a few moments there would be shortly afterwards the sound of someone stumbling hurriedly up the ladder and Mr. Doyle, his shirt sticking to his chest and his cheeks dilated with exertion, would totter up after them. Stephen gradually realised that Mr. Doyle was keeping an eye on him. He occupied a position somewhere between bodyguard and keeper.

"Now that you're going to be my son-in-law," he said one day in a sudden access of affection, grinning amiably, "I

don't want a breath of scandal attaching to you. It's for both your sakes I'm doing this. I want you and Gratia to have the best possible chance of success with nothing to hinder you. The East is a terrible place for scandal. Start one in Penang to-day and it's all over Singapore to-morrow. That's what I want to avoid. There's never been anything like that in our family, thank God! "

And so Mr. Doyle remained with them. The heat was however generally too much for him and he dozed off, his head drooping forward as if he had been hanged, his mouth open. Then Gratia would edge her chair a little away from his so that she and Stephen could talk. She still looked so pale that a stranger might have expected a nurse in uniform to come up on deck carrying a tonic and a medicine-glass on a tray. She slept badly and the dark circles under her eyes showed up the strange darkness of the eyes themselves: they seemed larger than ever in the whiteness of her face. But she was getting better every day. The knowledge on waking that she would not have to face Mr. Brentano, hearty and affectionate, did more for her than any tonic could have done.

Dr. Jarvis was immensely gratified at the rate of her recovery. He was too intimately familiar with his own record as a doctor to deceive himself that it was his treatment that was producing this effect. It was, however, pleasant to watch something which other people would doubtless attribute to him doing the good work. What made it all the more remarkable was that it was despite the fact that Gratia had lost her sweetheart. Women who had suffered a tragedy in love usually made the most difficult patients. They had nothing to live for. Gratia, however, seemed to have plenty. She was even singing one morning when he paid her his daily visit. He stood in the corridor and listened. It made him quite sad to think

what a lot he had lost in life through never having had a daughter of his own.

Gratia herself was happy. With the help of Father Manoel she endeavoured to keep her mind on the departed soul of Hector Brentano. But it was no use. She said her "Hail, Marys" obediently and diligently; and she meant them. Now that he was gone she did not bear him any ill will. But in the midst of saying her prayers—and Father Manoel was strict in this observance; down in the Third Class where he was confined he had really very little else to think about—the image of Stephen, vigorous and alive, would intrude. And after the third day, except that she added a prayer night and morning, when she said her ordinary prayers, she left the defenceless soul of Hector Brentano without earthly supplicant.

There was a new spirit in the air. The spirit of arrival. The *Tusitala*, which everyone had grown to accept philosophically as home (admittedly an uncomfortable, shifting, creaking sort of home; but a home nevertheless), now resolved itself once more into a ship with its load of passengers. Men and women whom one had grown to recognise as fellow human beings, with personal characteristics and the luxury of private thoughts of their own, now suddenly became merely so many stewards and stewardesses hanging around waiting for tips.

The man who had brought drinks, without warning presented the chits for payment. He was no longer your friend. He was merely a servant of the Company. Social levels were abruptly restored. It was as though a Capitalist Dictator had re-established himself in a Communist world.

There was even a difference discernible among the officers. At sea there was really nothing for them to do, and they endeavoured to conceal that fact by inspecting the ship with all the pomp of a Viceroy visiting a frontier fortress or by

relaxing openly (always with the suggestion that it was a sudden dispensation after arduous and unseen labour) and playing bridge with the passengers. At sea, they had merely to stand by and wait for the *Tusitala* to cross the vast plain of rolling water as slowly and grimly as an ant crossing a bowling green. They having set the course, an ordinary ignorant seaman could keep the ship to it.

They had emerged from the safe street of the Suez Canal on to the edge of this vast tundra of ocean, and now with the help of a chart and a gyroscopic compass and a table of sun readings, they were at the front door of their destination. Mr. Doyle felt like congratulating the Captain.

Already the sea around them showed signs of human life, almost of habitation. Smudges of smoke crossed the horizon and became large ships, engaged in regular, important journeys, carrying mail. Once they passed a great black and yellow liner with broad, squat funnels; like something out of the poster of a shipping line, she slid past, tossing up bundles of spray across her knife-like bows. Captain Curly regarded her with a jealous, unfriendly eye. There had been a day when the *Tusitala* had brought brown admiring natives down to the quaysides of the Far East to marvel at the might of the white man's sea craft. Now they ignored her and strained their eyes to see the latest motor vessel, with an engine-room like a borough power-station, coming in.

Not all the ships, however, had their origin in the mud-banked shipyards of Belfast and the Tyne. There were junks too, with sepia sails. Loaded with nutmeg and areca-nuts and cheap rice, they dipped and bobbed their way to some remote, golden port in Far Cathay. In these parts Chinamen could wake in the morning and find themselves at home.

The *Tusitala* had now been sailing in the East so long that the ports that clung to the other side of the globe—London,

Tilbury and Newcastle—had grown phantasmal and unreal. They belonged to another world, a world of grey towns and green meadows and smoky railway stations and dingy little dole queues. Here everything was different. They had sailed into a world of spice and sunlight; life was vivid and unexpected. Even their food had been recruited with strange fruits from their last port of call: the dessert at dinner was like a harvest festival.

Rangoon with its glistening golden Shwe Dagon Pagoda already lay behind them; and to have to pass Rangoon on the way home is proof to even the most stolid-minded of English travellers that home is a long way off.

At Rangoon a little sleek Buddhist priest in saffron robes had come aboard. He was plump as a pumpkin; his luggage was a rice bowl. He appeared to be supremely happy. His face was exactly like the face of every other Buddhist priest. He sat down in the sun and kept smiling as though the gods had just told him a joke.

The spirit of arrival began to affect everyone. People formed into little groups and talked about what they were going to do. Strange names—Kuala Lumpur, Taiping, Seremban—were in the air. Everyone was going to do something. Mild little men, like the husband of the woman who had heard the scream, who might have been travellers in fancy stationery, were now busily talking rubber or copra or tin. They were men who did things; that was why they were there. When it was discovered that the honeymoon couple were merely visiting Penang, that they really had no business there at all, people gave up trying to be friendly with them and left them to each other's company. They were idle outcasts in a busy world.

Stephen and Gratia regarded them enviously. Mr. Doyle hovering near caught Gratia's eye and pinched her arm

lovingly. "All in good time, dear," he said. "All in good time."

He had tripped and fallen the night before and broken one of his front teeth. The gap gave even his tenderest smiles a sinister distorted appearance.

NEXT MORNING everyone was about early. There was stir and bustle in the air. The stewards came in ten minutes before their time, looking pleased and conspiratorial: they evidently felt that they had done their bit, that in some measure the safe arrival of the *Tusitala* was due to them. Luggage—great piles of it—of all ages and shapes, cross-gartered with straps, and motley with labels of Swiss hotels and Egyptian State railways, stood about the corridors. The purser retired to his office, like a magistrate, confronting anxious perplexed people. He had the intimate details of their private lives on his papers before him. With the energy of a colonial governor in the pioneering days he made it possible for Penang to receive her new stock even though tickets and letters of credit had at the last moment unaccountably been lost or gone astray.

Penang lay five hours' steaming distance ahead. There was a general feeling that it was waiting for them, that it had got up early to receive them.

Mr. Doyle, in particular, was eager and excited. He dressed with unusual care, put on the blue and white bow tie that he had been keeping for the occasion and thrust a red silk handkerchief into his breast pocket. When he was dressed he eyed his straggling white hair with dissatisfaction. No man, he reflected, could possibly look really smart with his hair jutting

Ahead of them a tall white tower rose from the face of the waters. It was the clock tower of the railway station, someone said. In these moments such information passes for profound knowledge. It promotes a man.

The sea was now littered with shipping. The masts, from most of which little pennons fluttered, were as dense as telegraph poles seen down a long railway line. Some of the ships carried canvas screens stretched across them. They looked like so many floating marquees: they were like a fair-ground carried out to sea. Behind them were the high, banded funnels of the big steamers. Swettenham Pier poked out invitingly to meet them.

AN HOUR LATER they were there; they had arrived. Captain Curly took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. He heaved a great sigh of relief. This had seemed earlier an ill-fated trip. The crash in the Bay had been what he had always dreaded. When he ran down the *Carmen* he thought at the time that the last moment had come. But it had been nothing. It was all over. By now the Portuguese sailor was probably out at sea again, fishing in the patched-up *Carmen*. And Mr. Brentano—that had been a nasty and disquieting affair. But in the end it had smoothed itself out nicely. Captain Curly was glad. He would not have liked to have anything unpleasant happen on this, his penultimate passage in command of the *Tusilala*.

People began to come on board. Uniformed Penang officials, doctors, visitors who possessed influence and could not wait any longer to see their friends from England.

Mr. Doyle's agitation increased every moment. In his efforts not to meet an old acquaintance, he ran back into the saloon and was brought face to face with the steward whom he had been trying for the last twenty-four hours to avoid tipping.

Stephen gave Gratia's hand a squeeze. "How do you like the look of it?" he asked self-consciously, as though he had invented the whole island in a moment of genius. Gratia gave his hand a squeeze in return.

A tall, bearded priest in black *soutane* came striding through the people on the deck. He was looking for someone. He was Father Xavier.

Suddenly from the crowd on the deck there came a cry. Stephen and Gratia turned. The person who had cried out was a fat Eurasian woman clothed in what appeared to be endless bandages of brightly coloured silk. She was as flamboyantly dressed as a barber's pole. Her clothes gave the effect of having been bought before she began to put on weight. Over all drooped the enormous brim of a picture hat. Her hair, endless raven lengths of it, was coiled underneath. She jangled all over with bangles and cheap jewellery.

Mr. Doyle was looking at her like a squirrel regarding a serpent. He was clearly hypnotised. He came forward slowly and steadily, and was suddenly embraced between those dusky arms. His head was buried in her capacious bosom. The Eurasian woman was weeping tears of joy. Then she held his head between her hands and looked into his face. Mr. Doyle smiled weakly back. She noticed the missing tooth. With a fat brown finger she lovingly prodded and explored the empty gum.

"This is my daughter Gratia," Mr. Doyle said, when his companion let go of him long enough for him to make the introduction. "You've heard about her. And this?"—here he caught hold of Stephen by the elbow and dragged him forward with surprising force—"is my future son-in-law."

He turned to them. "I want you both to meet the second Mrs. D."

The fat dark woman smiled amiably. "Pleeser meechu," she said in a high treble voice like a child's. She almost curtsied.

In his little room off the bridge the Captain was reading a telegram from the owners. He read it laboriously as though he could not quite believe it. "*Carmen* sailor since died Stop," it ran. "Authorities demand Full Enquiry Stop. Await Instructions." For the second time he passed his handkerchief across his forehead. It came away wetter than before. He was oblivious to everything except himself and the accident: his blameless record lay shattered at his feet like a smashed vase. He looked at the telegram again closely to see if it was possible that he had misread it. It was not. He stood there quite motionless, feeling tired and suddenly sick.

Even the sight of Mr. Doyle and his lady friend embracing again in full view of the bridge did nothing to rouse him.

THE END

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